9. Satyāgraha

"ASK me to suspend my activities in that [satyāgraha] direction and you ask me to suspend my life. If I could popularize the use of soul-force, in place of brute-force, I know that I could present you with an India that could defy the whole world to do its worst. I shall discipline myself to express in my life the eternal law of suffering, and present it for acceptance to those who care, and if I take part in any other activity, the motive is to show the matchless superiority of that law...", Gandhi declared in a statement in 1917. Satyāgraha has practically become synonymous with Gandhi. A reviewer of Gandhi's philosophy aptly notes: "Gandhi's supreme invention, discovery or creation was *satyagraha*."[1]

What is satyāgraha? To a man in the street or to an unsophisticated villager in any part of India, satyāgraha stood for Gandhi's way of fighting the British Rāj. It was another name for war with an alien government. Satyāgraha may better be understood as a technique for solving conflict and a method for fighting evil. As has been pointed out by Dr. Joan V. Bondurant: "Satyagraha became something more than a method of resistance to particular legal norms; it became an instrument of struggle for positive objectives and for fundamental change....."[2] Prof. Nirmal Kumar Bose defines satyāgraha as "a way of conducting 'war' by means of non-violence."[3] Dr. Krishnalal Sridharani defined satyāgraha as "non-violent direct action."[4] His study on satyāgraha is entitled *War Without Violence*.

Literally translated, the word *satyāgraha* means 'holding fast to truth', 'adherence to truth', 'insistence on truth'. Gene Sharp says : "this weapon is an expression of a looking at life and a way of living. Gandhi's philosophy of life and his method of opposing evil are both called 'satyagraha'."[5] But satyāgraha viewed as 'a way of living' limits otherwise the broader appeal of this group technique of action. Bondurant argues : "Such an interpretation leads to the conclusion that a satyagrahi is either merely a 'seeker after truth', which is virtually meaningless or one who has adopted the Gandhian system of morals and values according to which Gandhi himself, as the authority, ordered 'the good life'. It is the latter construction which commonly leads to the opinion that a satyagrahi must be a vegetarian, must observe *brahmacharya* (continence), must develop *aparigraha* (non-possession) and must manifest other ideal Gandhian attributes. But the concept of satyagraha on the one hand is eminently more than an anarchical moral principle and, on the other, it does not make requisite those aspects of Gandhian teaching which specify rules of individual self-living. It is essential rigorously to differentiate satyagraha as technique of action from those specific considerations of right-living with which also Gandhi concerned himself. For satyagraha is basically an ethic-principle the essence of which is a social technique of action."[6]

The world today is passing through 'troubled times', or it may be said, after Toynbee, that our civilization is on trial. "The world has achieved brilliance without wisdom, power without conscience. Ours is a world of nuclear giants and ethical infants. We know more about war than we know about peace, more about killing, than we know about living." This comes not from the pen of a peace-partisan but from no less a military officer than General Omar N. Bradley.[7] Gandhi proposed to answer this challenge of contemporary human situation by bringing into operation a spirit of love, human dignity and a sense of human brotherhood. The technique to be employed, according to Gandhi, for bringing about a state

of affairs where the ideal of love would reign in place of killing, hatred and fear was satyāgraha.

It has been claimed that Gandhi's non-violence led to the independence of India. This claim is open to question. It is for the historian to assess and judge how far Gandhi's technique of non-violence was responsible for such a transformation. But there can be no two opinions about the fact that if any single individual is to be given credit for the freedom of India, it is indeed Gandhi and his technique of satyāgraha or non-violent direct action formed the main plank of the national liberation movement.

But satyāgraha, according to Gandhi, is not a method limited merely to a conflict-situation that subsisted between an alien rule and a subject community. The scope of satyāgraha is wider than that. For Gandhi, "the law of *satyagraha*, the law of love, is an eternal principle."[8] It is this 'eternal principle' of love in which, it is presumed, lies the world significance of Gandhi. But this message of love to the world preached as an abstract norm shorn of the dynamic method of satyāgraha does not carry any social relevance ; it becomes a platitude or, at its best, a pious wish of a group of 'good' but ineffective men.

For the message of love or non-violence to be meaningful and 'eternal' it must be related to its technique of solving the intra-national and international disputes that pose themselves as threats to human living and civilization.

A number of research studies on satyāgraha as a technique has already been published and yet others are under way of preparation.[9] A few of them, notably Prof. Nirmal Kumar Bose's *Studies In Gandhism*, Bondurant's *Conquest of Violence*, Sridharani's *War Without Violence*, etc., are really outstanding. Empirical case studies have also been made, though much remains to be done in this field. Because of elaborate studies already made on the subject we do not propose to discuss the technique of satyāgraha in detail. Nor shall we enter into a discussion of individual satyāgraha campaigns led by Gandhi, though the importance of such a study is recognized all right.

Ours will be a modest attempt to present the theory and technique of satyāgraha in a brief outline and try to assess the 'universal applicability' that this technique claims for itself.

A Note on Definitions

Opinions are sharply divided on the question as to whether satyāgraha is a form of non-violent coercion. A brief survey of the relevant opinions will be made subsequently. But for the present a note on definition of terms[10] like force, violence, injury, coercion, etc., may help us clarify our understanding.

Force is taken to mean the exercise of physical or intangible power or influence to effect change. *Violence* is the wilful application of force in such a way that it is intentionally injurious to the person or group against whom it is applied. *Injury* is understood to include psychological as well as physical harm. *Non-violence* when used in connexion with satyāgraha means the exercise of power of influence to effect change without injury to the opponent. *Coercion* has been defined as 'the use of either physical or intangible force to compel action contrary to the will or reasoned judgement of the individual or group subjected to such force'. It has been defined as the application of either physical or moral force to induce another to do something against his will. The question as to whether coercion can be violent as well as non-violent shall be treated separately in relation to an examination of the character of satyāgraha. Let us first try to follow the origin and development of this technique and its essentials which will be of help in any analysis of this concept.

Emergence of Satyāgraha

Satyāgraha is a technique for resolving conflicts. Various are the ways of classifying conflicts, according as they suit the needs of the particular problems in hand. Dr. Krishnalal Sridharani classified conflicts according to the nature of the unit of action pitted on each side, as follows :[11]

1. An individual versus another individual, or an individual pitted against a group ; or

2. A group pitted against another group ; or

3. A community versus the state.

The second and third types of conflict-situation are more important from the standpoint of group-behaviour and action. A group pitted against another group, according to the above classification, runs one entire gamut of conflicts. There is massed action on either side in this type of struggle. When one such party employs the non-violent method with a view to achieving its objectives, it naturally has to work out satyāgraha on a mass scale. In this form, satyāgraha can take place either (a) between a minority and a majority, or (b) between two economic classes such as the employers and the employees, or (c) between a section of the community and the government.

The first experiment with the ideology of non-violent direct action on a group scale was performed in South Africa under the leadership of Gandhi. It was applied to a combination of conflicts type-a and type-b ; that is, it was used by the Indian minority in South Africa against the European majority which constituted the government. Thus a small and comparatively weak section of the people was seeking redress from the government of the majority group. Although social and economic issues were involved in it, the prime objective of the satyāgraha was to secure political justice.[12]

We shall not trace here the story of satyāgraha as it evolved in South Africa. One may refer to Gandhi's own accounts of it in *Satyagraha in South Africa* as we have suggested earlier in Chapter 2.

In India, ever since Gandhi's entry into public life right to the end of his days in 1948, there have been numerous applications of satyāgraha in the sphere of inter-communal relations, or of economic, social and political conflict. Some of these were directly under his leadership, while quite a few of the minor or local ones were under his distant guidance, or else had sprung up independent of his knowledge, but obviously under the inspiration of the larger movements for which he was responsible.

We do not propose to make a survey of Champaran, Ahmedabad, Bardoli, Kheda, Vaikom—only to name the more important of the many non-violent group actions—satyāgraha campaigns. For that one may refer to the original materials and the studies[13] made on those operations. We shall concern ourselves more with the conflict-situation as enumerated in the third category of the classification given above, and that too with a limited aspect of the problem. It is not necessary in this study to detail out the non-violent direct actions (covering the period from 1919 to 1942) —the immediate circumstances, the objectives, preparation for action, the procedure of action, and results, etc., of those campaigns. We shall try to analyse the condition that favoured the adoption of this technique and at a later stage shall present the general method of satyāgraha as evolved in course of these operations.

We have said above (Chapter 2, p. 66 *supra*) that Gandhi for the first time introduced 'serious politics' in this country. The method of that 'serious politics' was satyāgraha. The Gandhian method of non-violent resistance was novel in the history of mass actions waged to resist encroachments upon human freedom.*

Any type of collective action to render itself effective must fulfil in some way or other the objective need of the situation.

* The first mass or corporate form of non-violent resistance occurred in Hungary during the middle of the nineteenth century, a short account of which is given below. But the scope of Gandhi's movement was much wider and more intensive. The impact of non-violent resistance movement in India on international and national politics was, needless to say, more profound than the Hungarian one.

"The Emperor Franz Josef was trying to subordinate Hungary to the Austrian power, contrary to the terms of the old treaty of union of those two countries. The Hungarian moderates felt helpless, as they were too weak to fight. But Francis Deak, a Catholic landowner of Hungary, protested to them—'Your laws are violated, yet your mouths remain closed! Woe to the nation which raises no protest when its rights are outraged! It contributes to its own slavery bv its silence. The nation which submits to injustice and oppression without protest is doomed.'

"Deak proceeded to organize a scheme for independent Hungarian education, agriculture and industry, a refusal to recognize the Austrian Government in any way, and a boycott against Austrian goods. He admonished the people not to be betrayed into acts of violence, nor to abandon the ground of legality. 'This is the safe ground,' he said, 'on which,

We have traced in some detail in Chapter 2 the philosophical roots and the traditional background of non-violent principles and method. Dr. Heinrich Zimmer emphasized the traditional background when he said: "Gandhi's program of satyāgraha, his national 'firm grasping of truth,' in strict adherence to the first principle of India's yoga mastery, *ahiṁsā*, 'noo-killing, non-violence,' is a serious, very brave, and potentially vastly powerful experiment in the ancient Hindu science of transcending the sphere of lower powers by entering that of the higher. Gandhi is confronting Great Britain's untruth (*asatya*) with India's truth (*satya*); British compromise with Hindu holy dharma. This is a wizard priest-battle, waged on the colossal, modern scale, and according to principles derived from the textbooks, not of the Royal Military College, but of Brahman."[14] This tradition in a sense, but in a higher form, culminated in the technique of satyāgraha. But traditional pacific attitude alone does not explain the

unarmed ourselves, we can hold our own armed force. If suffering must be necessary, suffer with dignity.' This advice was obeyed all through Hungary.

"When the Austrian tax collector came, the people did not beat him or even hoot him—they merely declined to pay. The Austrian police then seized their goods, but no Hungarian Auctioneer would sell them. When an Austrian Auctioneer was brought, he found that he would have to bring bidders from Austria to buy the goods. The Government soon found that it was costing more to distrain the goods than the tax was worth.

"The Austrians attempted to billet their soldiers upon the Hungarians. The Hungarians did not actively resist the order; but the Austrian soldiers themselves protested strongly against it, after trying to live in houses where everyone despised them. The Austrian Government declared the boycott of Austrian goods illegal, but the Hungarians defied the decree. The jails were filled to overflowing. No representatives from Hungary would sit in the Imperial Parliament.

"The Austrians then attempted a policy of conciliation. The prisoners were released and partial self-government given. But Hungary insisted upon its full claims. In reply, Emperor Franz Josef decreed compulsory military service. The Hungarians answered that they would refuse to obey it. Finally, on February 18, 1867, the Emperor capitulated and gave Hungary her constitution.

"This campaign seems to have been defective because of some violence of inner attitude on the part of the Hungarians. But even so, the campaign was a remarkable example of the power of non-violent resistance, even though the principle was imperfectly realized and applied."—Richard B. Gregg, *Gandhiji's Satyagraha Or Non-violent Resistance*, S. Ganesan, Madras, 1930, pp. 1-4. Based on and largely quoted from accounts by A. Fenner Brockway, *Non-co-operation in other Lands*, Tagore & Co., Madras, and his essay, 'Does Non-co-operation Work?' in *Pacifism in the Modern World*, ed., D. Allen, Doubleday, New York, 1929.

emergence of satyāgraha in India on a mass scale. The emergence of satyāgraha can only be explained in terms of tradition interacting upon 'condition', i.e., the objective historical situation. One has to find out the answer to the question, Why did the Indian people respond to Gandhi's call for non-violent resistance so readily ? Why did they prefer non-violent direct action, a comparatively novel weapon, to violent insurrectionary attempt, a tried techinque known to man since the beginning of recorded human history ? The answer demands a probe into the condition that existed at the time.

Condition[15]

To start with, the Indian people were disarmed at the time. As a penal measure against the so-called 'Sepoy Mutiny', a general programme of disarming the whole of India was set in motion by the victorious Britons. The policy culminated in the Indian Arms Act, 1878, which deprived all Indians, excluding the Europeans living in India, of their right to have in their "possession any arms to any description, except under a license and in the manner and of the extent permitted thereby."* The privilege of "license" proved in practice to be reserved for none but a handful of Indian officers whose loyalty to the "Crown" was beyond the shadow of a doubt. The subsequent interpretations of the Arms Act by the British Judges made the original statute more and more stringent until the definition of "arms" came to include "any implement which is capable of being used for attack or defence and is not intended for ordinary domestic purposes..."** This decision prohibited the possession of "a large clasp-knife with a pointed end fitted to a long handle."† In theory, therefore, an Indian was not to have even a knife such as the one used by the average European or American housewife for cutting a loaf or bread. As a consequence of Britain's determination to

* *Encyclopaedia of The General Acts and Codes of India*, Calcutta, 1935, p. 129.

** ibid. p. 126. The interpretation is taken from the judgment delivered in the case of the Emperor vs. Satish Chandra Roy.

† ibid, p. 126., King Emperor vs. Nga Lu Gale, 1927.

keep the Indian people unarmed, even the villagers living in, or near, dense jungles had no means at their disposal to protect themselves and their families from wild animals. A moderate estimate of the number of deaths caused each year by wild animals (over and above the heavy toll taken by poisonous reptiles) put the figure at 30,000 around 1930. Instead of saving these lives by allowing the forest-dwellers to arm themselves, the British government steadily pursued a policy of preserving wild animals in order to provide the White Sahibs and other Europeans with the thrill of 'big game hunting'. In the light of these facts, it seems to have been the deliberate policy of the ruling race to emasculate the Indian people as the best means of perpetuating British rule. A people thus deprived of every implement of self-defence became what Gandhi called 'a nation of cowards'.

The result was obvious. Even in case the Indian should have wanted to resort to violence in order to liberate his country, he had no means at his disposal. It was well-nigh impossible to import arms, for the Indian border was patrolled most methodically, day and night, by British troops. "The Local Government", ran the Arms Act, "with the previous sanction of the Governor-General in Council, may, at any places along the boundary-line between British Indian and foreign territory, and at such distance within such line as it deems expedient, establish searching-posts at which all vessels, carts and baggage animals, and all boxes, bales and packages in transit, may be stopped and searched for arms, ammunitions and military stores by any officer empowered by such Government in this behalf by name or in virtue of his office."* Terrorizing penalties awaiting the violator of the Arms Act, coupled with the vigilant activities of the C. I. D., more than dissuaded the Indian from any intention of acquiring arms. If the average Indian did succeed in acquiring some sort of a firearm, he did not know which end of it to hold in his

* *Encyclopaedia of the General Acts and Codes of India*, Calcutta, 1935, p. 127.

hands.* And in India, as anywhere else, it was impossible, legally, to organize on the basis of armed insurrection.

This legal disability pertaining to weapons of war was indeed unfavourable to armed revolt. However, that alone cannot account for the emergence of satyāgraha. It is, at best, a partial answer to our question of why Gandhi succeeded where others failed. The 'condition' of India—the historico-political situation—must have conformed with her 'tradition'—the constellation of folkways and mores—to give rise to satyāgraha. The important role of temperamental traits in shaping social action was clearly grasped by Gandhi. He displayed a fair knowledge of the people—'the people of the plains' as he called them—with whom he had to deal. For he wrote as early as November 24, 1921, in *Young India* :

"The people are too peaceful to stand anarchy. They will bow the knee to anyone who restores so-called order. Let us recognize the Indian psychology. We need not stop to inquire whether such hankering after peace is a virtue or a vice. The average Mussalman of India is quite different from the average Mussalman of the other parts of the world. His Indian associations have made him more docile than his co-religionists outside India. He will not stand tangible insecurity of life and property for any length of time. The Hindu is proverbially, almost contemptibly, mild. The Parsi and the Christian love peace more than strife. Indeed, we have almost made religion subservient to peace. This mentality is at once our weakness and our strength."[16]

That such people would not and could not use military force was self-evident. Yet they had to do something more than protest if they wanted to achieve decisive objectives. Implying that satyāgraha was the only possibility arising out of the unusual situation of India, Gandhi wrote on March 2,

* There were stray attempts to import 'illicit arms' into India, but all of them ended disastrously. The most famous attempt of the sort was engineered by the sturdy Sikhs of Canada and California during World War I. The *Komagatamaru*, the ship on which they sailed, however, was sighted and caught near Calcutta and all the occupants were reported massacred.

1922 : "The people of the plains do not know what it is to put up an organized armed fight. And they must become free, for they want freedom. They have realized that power seized by violence will only result in their greater grinding."[17]

It was this accurate understanding of the Indian mentality that won for Gandhi immediate response from the masses. So, when Gandhi offered his programme of non-violent direct action to the people of India, they felt as if they were listening to their own voice. The silent assumptions of centuries had begun to take shape, as it were, in Gandhi's utterances. Gandhi had discovered India's traditional springs of emotion. What then remained for him to do was to blast them free and direct the resultant flow into one mighty current.

The universal applicability of the instrument

It may be recalled here that the Indians in South Africa shared this common condition-tradition complex. From this one may very easily arrive at the conclusion that satyāgraha being a resultant product of the Indian ethos and the condition of general disarmament, was a technique that could only be applicable to India at a given phase of her development. Whether this assessment is valid or not shall be treated in the concluding portion of this study, since a close examination of this technique would enable us better to judge for ourselves the question of universal applicabity or otherwise of this instrument.

Basic precepts

On January 9, 1920, Gandhi appeared before the Disorders Inquiry Committee at Ahmedabad presided over by Lord Hunter. A brief extract from his oral evidence will explain the basic precepts of satyāgraha.

"Q. I take it, Mr. Gandhi, that you are the author of the Satyagraha movement.

A. Yes, Sir.

Q. Will you explain it briefly ?

A. It is a movement intended to replace methods of violence and a movement based entirely upon Truth. It is, as I have conceived it, an extension of the domestic law on the political field and my experience has led me to the conclusion that that movement and that alone can rid India of the possibility of violence spreading throughout the length and breadth of the land, for the redress of grievances.

Q. People differ as to the justice or injustice of particular laws ?

A. That is the main reason why violence is eliminated and a Satyagrahi gives his opponent the same right of independence and feelings of liberty that he reserves to himself and he will fight by inflicting injuries on his person...."[18]

Gandhi's enunciation of the doctrine shows that a few tenets are basic to satyāgraha. Truth, non-violence and self-suffering are the principles on which this technique is based. Understanding of these fundamentals combined with the skill in application determines the effective functioning of satyāgraha. The failure to comprehend these underlying assumptions and the methods based on them may lend the impression that any unarmed mass action wearing outwardly a non-violent appearance could be termed a satyāgraha. Satyāgraha is to be sharply distinguished from *Duragraha.*[19] Appearance is not enough, he would emphasize ; the strength of this technique lies in soul-force. So in order to comprehend the technique one must try to have a precise grasp of the concepts of truth, non-violence and self-suffering as understood by Gandhi and as employed by him in satyāgraha.

Truth

The root meaning of satyāgraha is "holding on to Truth, hence Truth-force." Gandhi also called it "Love-force."[20] The philosophy of satyāgraha is based on the assumption that "the world rests on the bedrock of satya or truth. Asatya, meaning untruth, also means non-existent, and satya or truth, means 'that which is'. If untruth does not so much as exist, its victory is out of the question. And truth being 'that which is' can never be destroyed."[21]

Gandhi, as we know, distinguished between truth as the *summum bonum*, i.e., Absolute, Universal, Infinite Truth and truth as a vow or a means, i.e., relative truth.

In the sense of Absolute Truth Gandhi identified Truth with God (see p. 85 *supra* ; Appendix I). But it is impossible for man, according to Gandhi, to realize Truth so long as he is imprisoned in 'this mortal frame'. "We cannot, through the instrumentality of this ephemeral body, see face to face Truth which is eternal."[22]

How, then, to realize truth ? "But as long as I have not realized the Absolute Truth, so long must I hold by the relative truth as I have conceived it. That relative truth must, meanwhile, be my beaon, my shield and buckler."[23]

He wrote : "It is not given to man to know the whole Truth. His duty lies in living upto the truth as he sees it, and in doing so, to resort to the purest means, i.e., to non-violence. Truth is not to be found in books. Truth resides in every human heart, and one has to search for it there, and to be guided by truth as he sees it. But no one has a right to coerce others to act according to his own view of truth."[24]

Thus truth is the end and non-violence the means. At times Gandhi went further and said that these were like two sides of a blank coin (see p. 137 *supra*) ; and on a few occasions he used 'non-violence' as a synonym of 'truth' in the sense that to him, ends and means were convertible terms. As every man's view of the truth is in the very nature of things fragmentary, no one can claim finality or infallibility for his own view, and must be prepared to concede the possibility of other men's opinions being true from their own standpoints. This leads to tolerance for views other than one's own, which is one of the salient features of non-violence.* The relative quality of truth is denied by the doctrine of violence in its final implication. "In the application of Satyagraha", said Gandhi in 1919, "I discovered in the earliest stages that pursuit of Truth did not admit of violence being inflicted on one's opponent, but that he must be

* See ch. 10, sec. 'Foundations of Democracy' for a discussion on this point.

weaned from error by patience and sympathy. For what appears to be Truth to the one may appear false to the other."[25]

Gandhi, in search of an absolute truth, concerned himself more intensively with the means whereby the realization of such truth might be advanced. Dr. Bondurant correctly notes, "the 'truth' concept which enters into the technique of satyagraha is clearly not that of the absolute. As he pursued his experiments with satyagraha the relative character of truth as an operative principle became the stronger."[26] The correctness of this interpretation would be evident from the extract given below :

"Sir Chimanlal : With regard to your Satyagraha doctrine, so far as I understand it, it involves the pursuit of Truth and in that pursuit you invite suffering on yourself and do not cause violence to anybody else.

Mr. Gandhi : Yes, sir.

Q. However honestly a man may strive in his search for Truth his notions of Truth may be different from the notions of others. Who then is to determine the truth ?

A. The individual himself would determine that.

Q. Different individuals would have different views as to Truth. Would that not lead to confusion ?

A. I do not think so.

Q. Honestly striving after Truth is different in every case.

A. That is why the non-violence part was a necessary corollary. Without that there would be confusion and worse."[27]

Every mode of social action directed at the determination of the truth of any matter, then, requires 'necessary corollary' of non-violence. What is the criterion of judging the truth as it functions in satyāgraha ? "The quest for Truth", said Gandhi, "cannot be prosecuted in a cave. One may live in a cave in certain circumstances, but the common man can be tested only in society."[28]

Gandhi frequently emphasized the partial manifestations of truth like honesty and integrity. These were derived from an implied social epistemology which led him, necessarily, back to the realm of ethics.[29]

Explaining the connexion between truth and non-violence, he wrote in a letter to Jamnalal Bajaj :

"As I proceed in my search for truth it grows upon me that Truth comprehends everything. It is not *ahimsa*, but *ahimsa* is in it. What is perceived by a pure heart and intellect is truth for that moment. Cling to it, and it enables one to reach pure Truth. There is no question there of divided duty. But often enough it is difficult to decide what is *ahimsa*. For instance, the use of disinfectants is *himsa*, and yet we cannot do without it. We have to live a life of *ahimsa* in a world of *himsa*, and that is possible only if we cling to truth. That is how I deduce *ahimsa* from truth. Out of truth emanate love, tenderness, humility. A votary of truth has to be as humble as the dust. His humility increases with his observance of truth. I see this every moment of my life. ...It will make us magnify the mole-hills of our errors into mountains and minimise the mountains of others' errors into mole-hills."[30]*

In his famous statement at the Great Trial (1922), Gandhi said : "Non-violence is the first article of my faith. It is also the last article of my creed."[31]

Now, what is non-violence ?

Gandhi defined *ahiṃsā* as "uttermost selflessness. Selflessness means complete freedom from a regard for one's body. If man desired to realize himself, i.e., Truth, he could do so only by being completely detached from the body, i.e., by making all other beings feel safe from him. That is the way of *ahimsa*."

But, "*Ahimsa* does not simply mean non-killing. *Himsa* means causing pain to or killing any life out of anger, or from a selfish purpose, or with the intention of injuring it. Refraining from so doing is *ahimsa*."[32]

For Gandhi's *ahiṃsā* "is not merely a negative state of harmlessness but it is a positive state of love, of doing good even to the evil-doer. But it does not mean helping the evil-

* cf. "Such a conception makes one severe in judging himself and humane in judging others."—John Dewey, *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, The Beacon Press, Boston, 1963, p. 176.

doer to continue the wrong or tolerating it by passive acquiescence. On the contrary, love, the active state of *ahimsa* requires you to resist the wrong-doer by dissociating yourself from him even though it may offend him or injure him physically."[33]

And "In its positive form, *ahimsa* means the largest love, greatest charity. If I am a follower of *ahimsa* I *must love* my enemy. I must apply the same rules to the wrong-doer who is my enemy or a stranger to me, as I would to my wrong-doing father or son. This active *ahimsa* necessarily includes truth and fearlessness. As man cannot deceive the loved one, he does not fear or frighten him or her. Gift of life is the greatest of all gifts ; a man who gives it in reality, disarms all hostility. He has paved the way for an honourable understanding. And none who is himself subject to fear can bestow that gift. He must therefore be himself fearless. A man cannot practise *ahimsa* and be a coward at the same time. The practice of *ahimsa* calls forth the greatest courage."[34]

That the doctrine of *ahiṃsā* as propounded by Gandhi is active and militant in character should be always borne in mind. In a sense, the relevance of satyāgraha as a group technique of action is based on this dynamic and assertive character of non-violence. That Gandhi's concept of non-violence was farthest removed from meek submission to evil and quietism will be further evident when we shall attempt to find out the distinction between satyāgraha or non-violent resistance on the one hand and passive resistance and non-resistance, as practised by the group generally known as pacifists, on the other.

Self-suffering

The third fundamental element of satyāgraha is self-suffering. We have traced in Chapter 2 the Hindu traditional background of self-suffering or *tapasyā*. *Tapasyā* conceived as a matter of discipline for attaining individual salvation was given a new connotation and was introduced in the field of social practice

by Gandhi. Conscious suffering, according to him, is another name for courage. As he wrote in his famous article 'The Doctrine of The Sword' : "Non-violence in its dynamic condition means conscious suffering. It does not mean meek submission to the will of the evil-doer, but it means the putting of one's whole soul against the will of the tyrant. Working under this law of our being, it is possible for a single individual to defy the whole might of an unjust empire to save his honour, his religion, his soul and lay the foundation for that empire's fall or its regeneration."[35]

Self-suffering in satyāgraha is directed, first of all, towards the conversion and moral persuasion of his opponent.

"The Satyagrahi seeks to convert his opponent by sheer force of character and suffering. The purer he is and the more he suffers, the quicker the progress."[36]

"Love never claims, it ever gives. Love ever suffers, never revenges itself."[37]

Self-suffering differs from the doctrine of violence which has reference only to the doing of injury by one to another. Replying to a German correspondent Gandhi wrote : "Suffering injury in one's own person is, on the contrary, of the essence of non-violence and is the chosen substitute for violence to others. It is not because I value life low that I can countenance with joy thousands voluntarily losing their lives for satyagraha, but because I know that it results in the long run in the least loss of life, and, what is more, it ennobles those who lose their lives and morally enriches the world for their sacrifice."[38]

It was a fundamental conviction with Gandhi that "things of fundamental importance to the people are not secured by reason alone but have to be purchased with their suffering. Suffering is the law of human beings ; war is the law of the jungle. But suffering is infinitely more powerful than the law of the jungle for converting the opponent and opening his ears, which are otherwise shut, to the voice of reason."[39]

Self-suffering is no irksome burden. "Suffering cheerfully endured ceases to be suffering and is transmuted into an ineffable joy."[40]

It is interesting to note in this connexion that the following lines from Shelley were quoted in the pages of Gandhi's *Young India*[41] :

To suffer woes which hope thinks infinite ;
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night,
To love, to bear, to hope till Hope creates
From its own wreck the things it contemplates ;
Neither to change, to falter, nor repent ;
This like the glorious Titan is to be
Great, good and joyous, beautiful and free ;
This is alone life, joy, Empire and Victory.

Prof. Morris-Jones correctly notes : "If *ahimsa* is a positive psychological state, self-suffering is the corresponding policy in action. Confronted with a situation of conflict, the devotee of non-violence seeks to break the deadlock by self-suffering. The merit of self-suffering lies not at all in its being a weapon of the weak ; indeed its use demands unusual courage and freedom from fear. Nor does it lie merely in its 'morally enriching' effect on the satyagrahi. It lies above all in its efficiency as an instrument of social persuasion."[42]

Self-suffering has a positive instrumental value. "...it is not meetings and demonstrations that would give us victory, but quiet suffering."[43] The eminent American sociologist Prof. Ross drew attention to this aspect when he wrote : "The spectacle of men suffering for a principle and *not hitting back* is a moving one. It obliges the power holders to condescend to explain, to justify themselves."[44] That this really happened can be illustrated from an incident as recorded in *Satyagraha in South Africa*.

"One of the secretaries of General Smuts jocularly said : 'I do not like your people, and do not care to assist them at all. But what am I to do ? You help us in our days of need. How can we lay hands upon you ? I often wish you took to violence like the English strikers, and then we would know at once how to dispose of you. But you will not injure even the enemy. You desire victory by self-suffering alone, and never transgress your self-imposed limits of courtesy and

chivalry. And that is what reduces us to sheer helplessness.' General Smuts also gave expression to similar sentiments."[45]

The Gandhian doctrine of self-suffering has been subject to varying interpretations. Some commentators have found in this doctrine a form of masochism. Theodore Reik understands "Gandhi's non-violence program as sublimated masochism."[46] John Gunther also interprets 'the meekness' of satyāgraha in terms of masochism.[47] M. N. Roy in his 'Psychoanalysis of Gandhism' regarded Gandhi to a masochistic personality.[48] Edward Thompson finds in Gandhi "a harmless touch of masochism."[49] Dr. Paul F. Power, however, draws a different conclusion: "Gandhi probably drew his conception of non-masochistic suffering from the ancient Vedic tradition of propitiating sacrifice transformed in the Upanishads so that the ego is made the subject and object of suffering."[50] Dr. Viswanath Prasad Varma also holds that it is not correct to interpret satyāgraha in terms of masochism.[51]

We do not feel competent enough to make a psychoanalytical exploration into Gandhi's inner being. But this much is evident that the psychoanalytical method, however important it may be in its own domain, does not adequately explain the relevance of self-suffering as a moral as also a social weapon. It should be viewed in terms of the ethic of the dignity of the individual. The effect of individual self-suffering and sacrifice on society—it acts as a 'shock treatment' —should be given more importance. Self-suffering is not just a fad or a form of gross superstition. Hartmann puts it well: "If with his suffering a man purchases the highest values, the thought of a will to suffer has nothing absurd in it. There is such a will. Whoever assumes great burdens must have it. It is nothing unusual for a man to suffer for the sake of a high goal, of an idea, for the sake of the communal life."[52]

Erich Fromm says: "There are two entirely different types of sacrifice. It is one of the tragic facts of life that the demands of our physical self and the aims of our mental self can conflict; that actually we may have to sacrifice our physical self in order to assert the integrity of our spiritual

self. This sacrifice will never lose its tragic quality. Death is never sweet, not even if it is suffered for the highest ideal. It remains unspeakably bitter, and still it can be the utmost assertion of our individuality."[53]

Karl Jaspers, the famous Existentialist philosopher, in his recent book, *The Future of Mankind*, has devoted a section on the concept of sacrifice from which a rather longish excerpt is given below. He writes :

"Essential to man is the *conscious* sacrifice, the risking of his life. Conscious risk in the world which is not adequately comprehensible in terms of the world. The foundation of everything sublime in man is sacrifice. Even in failure, the sacrifice as such is a fulfilment of infinite significance. Man does not know his humanity until he proves it by courage and by contempt of death. These have a different basis from mere life. There is more to man than life. And though self-denial, if we go on living, is but a partial sacrifice, this too can be experienced like the destruction from which another life arises. We like to disguise sacrifice and its meaning because we cannot bear it. Or we seek to compensate for it by renunciation supposed to take its place. We do not face it, because we do not want to make the sacrifice ; we should like to be happy without it. But it is a vain attempt to wrest happiness from a sacrifice we have evaded. Without sacrifice, there is a rift in our existence ; it dims itself in self-delusions.

"Sacrifice has two aspects : withdrawal from the world, and activity in the world.

"An unworldly sacrifice is the wanton waste of life in battle, proudly conscious only of one's own contempt of death or yielding to blind obedience in obscure expectation...

"To risk death with a will to live in the world is quite a different matter. Out of this risk alone grows real earnestness. Only those live constructively who are prepared to give their lives and will sacrifice them in the constant wear of service to their task. This sacrifice, if not consummated in death, works creatively, builds in the world, provides fulfilment.

"...The eternal meaning of sacrifice is independent of the success of its worldly purpose, and yet it is substantial only in conjunction with the will to a worldly realization."[54]

Romano Guardini asserts that "inwardly accepted suffering transforms the sufferer" and "all existential growth depends not on effort alone, but also on freely offered sacrifice."[55]

Brewster Kneen argues that voluntary suffering has a redemptive effect by terminating a process whereby violence and involuntary suffering have been passed from person to person. The redemptive sufferer thus "removes any threat to others of having the suffering inflicted upon them. The removal of this threat has the effect of increasing social solidarity."[56]

Leo Kuper observes that the active courting of suffering by the non-violent resister is not effective "where the ruler is a collectivity and responds to the subordinate as a collectivity, and where the suffering is a challenge to the ruler's ideology of domination."[57] At the same time, Kuper acknowledges that the aceptance of suffering has a liberating spiritual effect among the resisters, creating morale and solidarity within their ranks.

Kierkegaard writes of the good to be derived by the incurable sufferer who not only accepts but embraces his suffering and invests it with meaning.[58]

William Robert Miller suggests that "by an act of will the sufferer ceases to be an inert object and becomes a freely acting subject. ...In this lies its expressive value."[59]

We have quoted authorities only to make out that the Gandhian doctrine of self-suffering should not be viewed as a dogma. Individual self-suffering and self-immolation in any conflict-situation gives a new orientation in the direction of resolution of conflict and by virtue of its impact on the community effectively functions as a tool—a moral weapon—for the establishment of a cause.

Non-resistance, Passive Resistance and Satyāgraha

Gandhi's non-violence was not a 'cloistered virtue'; he applied it to the mundane plane to prove its superiority as a

weapon to fight evil. Gentleness or non-violence practised in individual relationship or spiritual non-violence as being unrelated to mundane life has nothing in common with non-violent resistance as conceived and applied by Gandhi. The different meanings of non-violence can only reveal themselves in their own backgrounds. Prof Toynbee says that there are four distinct meanings of the term. To quote him :

"At its lowest the practice of Non-Violence may express nothing more noble or more constructive than a cynical disillusionment with the fruitlessness of a Violence which has been previously practised *ad nauseum* without having produced the intended results. A notorious example of a Non-Violence of this unedifying kind is the religious toleration which has been in vogue in the Western World from about the last quarter of the seventeenth century of the christian Era down to our own day. Alternatively, Non-Violence may express a conviction that Man's divinely alloted role in the economy of the Universe is to adopt a patiently passive attitude towards a mundane scene on which it is God's exclusive prerogative to execute His divine will through His own action—which would be hampered, and not assisted, if Man were to presume to intervene in what is wholly God's business. Such is, for example, the conviction that underlies the Non-Violence of the *Agudath Israel.* This second philosophy of Non-Violence is as pious and as scrupulous as our first is unprincipled and cynical ; but at the same time it resembles the Non-Violence of Disillusionment in being unconstructive. Non-Violence may, however, also be practised as a means to some constructive end ; and such an end, again, may be either mundane or 'Otherworldly'. A classic example of the practice of Non-Violence for a mundane end is presented in Mahatma Gandhi's political tactics of Non-Violent Non-Co-operation. The aim of Mr. Gandhi and his followers is to obtain for the people of India the political boon of complete self-government ; and the pursuit of this aim by these tactics is evidence of a high degree of intellectual and moral originality ; for the aim in view has been valued at its present enormously current price

in a Western Vanity Fair ; and our Western nationalists have seldom or never abstained from resorting to Violence—of heart, if not of hand—in their endeavours to gain possession of this coveted pearl. Mr. Gandhi's tactical recourse to Non-Violence is therefore a noteworthy new departure in the political technique of a Westernized 'Great Society' ; but it is not, of course, so great a departure as a practice of Non-Violence for reasons which are not just tactical but are strategic. While Mr. Gandhi practises Non-Violence because he considers this to be the most efficacious means of pursuing an aim that is mundane, the Non-Violence of Jesus and Johanan ben Zakkai is a reflection on the mundane plane, of a transference of the field of action from that mundane plane to another."[60]

True it is, as had been pointed out by Mahadev Desai, that Gandhi refused to make any distinction between the mundane and the 'Otherworldly' plane so far as the moral and physical laws which govern them are concerned.[61] A closer examination seems to be necessary to understand the real implications of Gandhi's non-violence.

Non-resistance

"But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil : but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." (Matthew, 5 : 39). Gandhi said, Jesus was "a prince among passive resisters, who uncompromisingly challenged the might of the Sadducees and the Pharisees and for the sake of truth did not hesitate to divide sons from their parents."[62]* Tolstoy tried to elucidate the dictum by saying

* *Christ and Non-co-operation.—Apropos* it is interesting that Christ himself has suggested Non-co-operation. In the eighteenth chapter of Matthew, we read :

Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go, and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou has gained thy brother.

But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it up to the Church : but if he neglect to hear the Church, *let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.—Young India* of 10 November, 1920, in *Young India* 1919-22, S. Ganesan, Madras, 1922, pp. 239-40.

For correspondence between the Rev. Gillespie and Gandhi, see *Young India*, 19. 1. 21, 23. 2. 21 in *Young India* 1919-22, op. cit., pp. 240-3 fn.

that 'non-resistance' meant 'non-resistance by violence'.[63]* As far back as 1909, Gandhi said that "Resist not evil" meant that "evil was not to be repelled by evil, but by good ; in other words, physical force was to be opposed, not by its like but by soul force."[64] The word 'non-resistance', in its commonly understood connotation, does not fully bring out the principle of non-violent resistance as enunciated by Gandhi.

According to C. M. Case, non-resistance is essentially an attitude of submission and of passive suffering.[65]

Bondurant says : "It must be kept firmly in mind that *non-resistance* does not describe satyagraha. Much confusion of thought on Gandhian techniques arises from the failure to distinguish at all times between the active resistance undertaken in satyagraha and the occasional non-resistant effect of such activities as inviting imprisonment. ...It must also be insisted that 'non-resistance' in no way characterizes satyagraha and describes only a step in a civil disobedience effort."[66]

Power remarks : "Claims that satyagraha is a non-violent force are in keeping with Gandhi's idea that ahimsa, the headwater of satyagraha, is dynamic and not pietistic reverence for life or non-resistance."[67]

Nehru wrote : "Gandhiji's non-violence, it is true, is certainly not a purely negative affair. It is not non-resistance. It is non-violent resistance, which is a very different thing, a positive and dynamic method of action. It was not meant for those who meekly accept the *status quo*. The very purpose for which it was designed was to create 'a ferment in society' and thus to change existing conditions."[68]

Kripalani succintly sums up the position : "Non-resistance to evil as conceived of old was purely a spiritual doctrine. It prescribed an individual's duty towards himself and his maker. To a certain extent it did affect social life. But it did this

* Tolstoy's interpretation of Matthew 5 : 39 :

"Never resist the evildoer by force, do not meet violence with violence. If they be at you, endure it ; if they take your possessions, yield them up ; if they compel you to work, work ; and if they wish to take from you what you consider to be yours, give it up."—'What I Believe' in *The Tolstoy Centennial Edition*, Oxford University Press, 1928-1937, vol. 11, p. 398.

indirectly. It had little concern with group problems except in so far as the multiplication of good individuals would certainly make a difference in social conduct and relations. *Satyagraha*, on the other hand, is both an individual obligation and a social and political duty. Non-resistance of the old type again was a vindication of an individual's right not to submit to insolent might or to any wrongful authority, be it of the family or of the social, economic or political group or class. *Satyagraha*, in addition to all this, provides also for corporate and group action. It is not merely to vindicate one's individual right and register one's individual protest but to take collective political action and, if need be, to bring about the end of a bad social, economic or political system, by making its working impossible."[69]

And "Gandhiji...when shown the King's coin, will not, like Jesus in similar circumstances, say, 'Render unto Caesar the things that belong to Caesar and to God the things that belong to God'. He would rather say : 'To Caesar belongs the honourable and proud privilege of service to the community. Gold and silver he shall have, but only to the extent that is necessary for the discharge of his noble trust and no more. He shall have what befits the trustee and the servant of the poor.' Gandhiji would also enquire if Caesar's stewardship had the approval of the people."[70]

Reinhold Niebuhr says that Gandhi "never commits himself to pure non-resistance. He is politically too realistic to believe in its efficacy."[71]

William Robert Miller suggests that many of the actions led by Gandhi "more visibly reflect similarities to an industrial strike than to the traditional ways of religious non-resistance."[72]

H. N. Brailsford writes : "Turning the other cheek and still more clearly the injunction 'whoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain' are more suggestive of yielding to melt the violent man than of defiance, however mystically passive it may be, of Gandhi's technique. The Christian rule is thus non-resistance to evil rather than passive resistance. Its tradition, laid down by St. Paul, is obedience in its own

sphere to the civil power ; passive resistance, with no social or political object in view, was offered only to the command to sacrifice to 'idols'."[73]

Western pacifism derives its strength from the philosophy of non-resistance to evil as propounded in the Sermon on the Mount. Its weakness lies in its nature of negation. As Krishnalal Sridharani remarked : "Not having evolved any positive construct or instrument of its own, it fails to meet difficult social needs and remains at best a pious wish. William Penn, William Lloyd Garrison and, to a great extent, Count Leo Tolstoy, sought in their own characteristic ways to mitigate this shortcoming by evolving a social practice of *passive resistance* out of the old theological doctrine of *non-resistance*. It was a step further in so far it implied that something more than non-resistance is required to achieve certain political and social ends. Nevertheless, the effort never came to anything, so that Tolstoy, the most notable of the doctrinaires of passive resistance and one of the greatest influences on the nineteenth century thought, lamented in his *Letter to the Liberals* : 'There are people who realise that our Government is very bad and who struggle against it, and there have been two ways of carrying on the struggle.' After drawing a line between the method of the revolutionaries which consists of an attempt to alter the existing regime by violence, and the method of the 'gradualists' which consists of carrying on the struggle without violence and within the limits of the law, conquering constitutional rights bit by bit, he confessed : 'Reflection and experience alike show me that both the means of combating Government used heretofore are not only ineffectual but actually tend to strengthen the power and irresponsibility of the Government.' However, Tolstoy himself had nothing to offer. What he was groping toward might have been a sort of *direct action just short of war* which Gandhi, partly inspired by the Russian, evolved afterwards in South Africa."[74]

Gandhi sometimes interchangingly used non-resistance for satyāgraha, such as, "That is the way of *satyagraha* or the way of non-resistance to evil. It is the aseptic method in which the

physician allows the poison to work itself out by setting in motion all the natural forces and letting them have full play."[75]* But his concept of non-resistance was different from the generally understood sense of the term.

Passive Resistance

Satyāgraha has been popularly translated into English as passive-resistance or non-co-operation. These words, however, scarcely convey its true significance. In South Africa Gandhi himself used the term *passive resistance* in the sense of satyagraha.** The XVII chapter of *Hind Swaraj* is entitled 'Passive Resistance'. Later he drew a clear distinction between these two terms.

Gandhi wrote on many occasions in the pages of *Young India* and *Harijan* to make explicit the distinction between the concepts underlying these two terms. A few extracts, as given below, will convey a better meaning than any paraphrase on the subject.

"Satyagraha differs from Passive Resistance as the North Pole from the South. The latter has been conceived as a weapon of the weak and does not exclude the use of physical force or violence for the purpose of gaining one's end, whereas the former has been conceived as a weapon of the strongest and excludes the use of violence in any shape or form.

"The term Satyagraha was coined by me in South Africa to express the force that the Indians there used for full eight years and it was coined in order to distinguish it from the movement then going on in the United Kingdom and South Africa under the name of Passive Resistance."[76]

"Non-co-operation is not a passive state, it is an intensely active state—more active than physical resistance or violence. Passive resistance is a misnomer."[77]

* "Non-co-operation is not allopathic treatment, it is homoeopathic."—*Young India*, 9.2.22 in *Young India* 1919-22, S. Ganesan, Madras, 1922, p. 988.

** The term Satyāgraha originated in a slogan contest Gandhi conducted in South Africa in 1906 when he wanted an Indian word to describe his programme. The winning term was *Sadāgraha* meaning 'firmness in a a good cause'. Preferring 'truth-force', Gandhi personally changed *Sadāgraha* to *Satyāgraha*.—See M. K. Gandhi, *Satyagraha In South Africa*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1950, p. 109.

"While in passive resistance there is scope for the use of arms when a suitable occasion arrives, in Satyagraha physical force is forbidden even in the most favourable circumstances.

"In passive resistance there is always present an idea of harassing the other party and there is a simultaneous readiness to undergo any hardships entailed upon us by such activity ; in Satyagraha there is not the remotest idea of injuring the opponent. Satayagraha postulates the conquest of the adversary by suffering in one's own person."[78]

In passive resistance non-violence is adopted as a matter of outward form ; the basic motive of love, as it is understood to be functioning in satyāgraha, remains absent, Hatred becomes the prime-mover.

"...while there is no scope for love in passive resistance, on the other hand not only has hatred no place in Satyagraha but is a positive breach of its ruling principle."[79]

"Passive resistance is a negative thing, and has nothing to do with the active principle of love. Satyagraha proceeds on the active principle of love which says, 'Love those that despitefully use you. It is easy for you to love your friends. But I say unto you, love your enemies'."[80]

"Passive resistance, unlike non-violence, has no power to change men's hearts."[81]

Satyāgraha and Passive Resistance of the Svadeśī period

During the Svadeśi period the New Party advocated passive resistance. The passive resistance of this period was a political technique of limited action as compared to the more comprehensive concept of satyāgraha. Sometimes Passive Resistance meant only svadeśī and boycott, while sometimes it was extended to cover even disobedience of unjust laws and decrees. Sri Aurobindo published a series of articles in *Bandemataram* from April 9, 1907 to April 23, 1907 on 'Passive Resistance'[82] which may be taken for the theoretical platform of the New Party.

As a political leader and writer, Sri Aurobindo made an intense and passionate appeal for passive resistance, or as it might be

most comprehensively termed, defensive resistance. He regarded Pherozeshah Mehta and some of his colleagues who were the exponents of the "opposition-cum-co-operation theory" as anachronistic in their outlook. Sri Aurobindo condemned the politics of petitioning as "the dream of timid inexperience, the teaching of false friends who hope to keep us in perpetual subjection, foolish to reason, false to experience."[83] He advocated the method of passive resistance to be followed.

"The essential difference between passive or defensive and active or aggressive resistance is this", wrote Sri Aurobindo, "that while the method of the aggressive resister is to do something by which he can bring about positive harm to the Government, the method of the passive resister is to abstain from doing something by which he would be helping the Government. The object in both cases is the same,—to force the hands of the Government ; the line of attack is different."[84]

It concentrates upon organized disobedience to a harsh law and thereby insists upon its withdrawal. Under a certain set of the situations and conditions disobedience to an unjust law becomes not only legally justifiable but even an imperative moral duty. Sri Aurobindo wrote : "A law imposed by a people on itself has a binding force which cannot be ignored except under extreme necessity : a law imposed from outside has no such moral sanction ; its claim to obedience must rest on coercive force or on its own equitable and beneficial character and not on the source from which it proceeds. If it is unjust and oppressive, it may become a duty to disobey it and quietly endure the punishment which the law has provided for its violation. For passive resistance aims at making a law unworkable by general and organized disobedience and so procuring its recall, it does not try, like aggressive resistance, to destroy the law by destroying the power which made and supports the law. It is therefore the first canon of passive resistance that to break an unjust coercive law is not only justifiable but, under given circumstances, a duty."[85]

Passive resistance was negative, and self-help the positive, side of the movement to obtain an explicit and dynamic

realization of the national consciousness. The philosophy and technique of the Passive Resistance movement in Bengal, writes Dr. Viswanath Prasad Varma,[86] anticipated many of the Gandhian techniques of non-co-operation. Sri Aurobindo stated: "The bureaucracy depends for the success of its administration on the help of the few and the acquiescence of the many. If the few refused to help, if Indians no longer consented to teach in Government schools or work in the Government offices, or serve the alien as police, the administration could not continue for a day."[87]

Sri Aurobindo's views also partly resemble the Gandhian ideas about constructive self-development of the nation as a *sine qua non* of success in political resistance and struggle against authorities. But Gandhi's adherence to the creed of *ahiṃsā* was not to be found in Sri Aurobindo's doctrine. Sri Aurobindo, a believer in political Vedāntism and *Dharma-Yuddha*, frankly stated that if passive resistance failed active resistance should be resorted to. As he wrote: "We have not the slightest wish to put forward passive resistance as an inelastic dogma. We preach defensive resistance mainly passive in its methods at present, but active whenever active resistance is needed, but defensive resistance within the limits imposed by human nature and by the demands of self-respect and the militant spirit of true manhood. If at any time the laws obtaining in India or the executive action of the bureaucracy were to become so oppressive as to render a struggle for liberty on the lines we have indicated, impossible; if after a fair trial given to this method, the object with which we undertook it, proved to be as far off as ever; or if passive resistance should turn out either not feasible or necessarily ineffectual under the conditions of this country, we should be the first to recognize that everything must be reconsidered and that the time for new men and new methods had arrived. We recognize no political object of worship except the divinity in our Motherland, no present object of political endeavour except liberty, and no method or action as politically good or evil except as it truly helps or hinders our progress towards national emancipation."[88]

Hence the conclusion may be drawn that Sri Aurobindo adopted passive resistance "as our most natural and suitable weapon" at a given stage of India's political subjection, and armed revolt was not tabooed as a matter of moral principle; rather it was more as a matter of expediency that the doctrine of passive resistance waa formulated. Satyāgraha, on the other hand, as Gandhi held, is not a matter of expediency—it might have been expedient as well[89]— but a matter of moral principle to be applied to all aspects of life.

Non-violent Resistance

Satyāgraha may aptly be described as non-violent resistance.* Satyāgraha, in its essentials, is active and dynamic resistance to evil. As Romain Rolland had put it: "No one has a greater horror of passivity than this tireless fighter, who is one of the most heroic incarnations of a man who *resists*. The soul of his movement is active resistance—resistance which finds outlet, not in violence, but in the active force of love, faith, and sacrifice. This threefold energy is expressed in the word *Satyagraha*."[90] Gandhi himself stressed upon the active aspect of his non-violent weapon. "Yours should not merely be a passive spirituality that spends itself in idle meditation, but it should be an active thing which will carry war into the enemy's camp."[91]

The western pacifists, because of their absolutistic concepts, could not appreciate the dynamic and militant character of Gandhi's non-violence. In the words of H. Runham Brown, a well-known pacifist of Britain: "Gandhiji was unlike other saints. He was a practical statesman of the world. Ideals in the clouds never appealed to him. He must make them work, and he did. I had the great privilege of receiving and passing on a long correspondence between Gandhiji and Vladimir

* Haridas T. Muzumdar writes that the term non-violent resistance was coined and used for the first time by him in 1921 in order to describe to a forum audience at the Community Church of New York the nature of the Gandhi movement.—See *Mahatma Gandhi: A Prophetic Voice*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1963, p. 60.

Tchertkoff, Leo Tolstoy's great Secretary, and Russia's greatest pacifist and anarchist, there being no direct post between Russia and India. I was invited to read that correspondence, and I did. Tchertkoff was telling Gandhiji that he was not really a pacifist at all. I think the mistaken idea of the Russian was not so much due to the fact that Gandhiji had come more slowly to his pacifist convictions than the great anarchist had, but because of certain things that the Mahatma had said or written. He had declared that it was better to fight even with carnal weapons than to cravenly submit to injustice. Sayings like this were quite incomprehensible to Vladimir Tchertkoff. To him pacifism was a great religious faith—nothing could shift him."[92]

To Gandhi resistance to evil was the supreme duty. He always emphasized upon direct action and he declared that "Never has anything been done on this earth without direct action."[93] To resist non-violently was the most manly course. But he did not make a fetish of non-violence. He was not a literalist in his conception of *ahiṃsā*. To him the test of *ahiṃsā* is a violent intention behind a thought, word or deed, i.e., an intention to harm.[94]

Gandhi's theory of non-violence is no cover for cowardice. As he himself wrote: "My creed of non-violence is an extremely active force. It has no room for cowardice or even weakness. There is hope for a violent man to be some day non-violent, but there is none for a coward. I have therefore said more than once that if we do not know how to defend ourselves, our women and our places of worship by the force of suffering, i.e., non-violence, we must, if we are men, be at least able to defend all these by fighting."[95] "Non-violence and cowardice go ill together. I can imagine a fully armed man to be at heart a coward. Possession of arms implies an element of fear, if not cowardice. But true non-violence is an impossibility without the possession of unadulterated fearlessness."[96]

He would rather prefer violence to cowardice.

"I would risk violence a thousand times than the emasculation of the whole race."[97]

"I do believe that, where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence, I would advise violence. I would rather have India resort to arms in order to defend her honour than that she should, in a cowardly manner, become or remain a helpless witness to her own dishonour."[98]

It was not the outer manifestation of violence that he despised so much as he did cowardice. He wrote : "Cowardice is perhaps the greater vice from which we suffer and is also possibly the greatest violence, certainly far greater than bloodshed and the like that generally go under the name of violence."[99]

Refuting the charge that his weapon was a weapon merely of the weak, he wrote as early as 1909 : "Believe me that a man devoid of courage and manhood can never be a passive resister."[100]

A true understanding of the significance of courage in Gandhian philosophy is necessary. It is to this aspect that Susanne Hoeber Rudolph tries to draw attention in a recent article.[101] The question of the significance of preaching the message of fearlessness and courage among an emasculated people will be taken up elsewhere (see Chapter 10 below) and as such no discussion seems to be called for at this place. But this point needs be taken note of since attempts have been made to debase the essential fighting core of this doctrine.

Resistance 'almost non-violent'

We propose to deal in a subsequent chapter with Gandhi's attitude towards war and there we shall see that he did not share the absolutistic notion of non-violence of the western pacifists. For the present, we would like to point out that on two occasions he characterized resistance of the people, in two different situational contexts, as 'almost non-violent'.

Gandhi appreciated the resistance of Poland, albeit violent, against Nazi aggression and went the whole length to write : "If Poland has that measure of uttermost bravery and an equal measure of selflessness, history will forget that she defended herself with violence. Her violence will be counted

almost as non-violence."[102] Later he explained it more precisely. He said : "If a man fights with his sword single-handed against a horde of dacoits armed to the teeth, I should say he is fighting almost non-violently. Haven't I said to our women that, if in defence of their honour they used their nails and teeth and even a dagger, I should regard their conduct non-violent ? She does not know the distinction between Himsa and Ahimsa. She acts spontaneously. Supposing a mouse in fighting a cat tried to resist the cat with his sharp beak, would you call that mouse violent ? In the same way, for the Poles to stand valiantly against the German hordes vastly superior in numbers, military equipment and strength, was almost non-violence."[103]

This epithet he used on a second occasion, with respect to the violent outbursts manifested during the Quit India movement of 1942 in some parts of the country against the the brutal repression of the government which Gandhi described as 'leonine violence'. He gave voice to his thoughts on this subject more than once during his twenty one-day fast in the Aga Khan Palace in February, 1943. He unequivocally expressed his emphatic disapproval of the sabotage, secrecy and violence resorted to by the people in the country. He said that his name must not be used in support of these activities, and that he still swore by non-violence to the same extent as he did before, and that, again, he still wished people to fight in a purely non-violent manner. "Let me warn you", said he, "that India will never succeed in attaining her freedom through violence. If a vast country like ours, with a population of four hundred millions, takes to the path of violence, the world cannot escape destruction. If, on the contrary, we keep on the straight path, we may be able to show the same to the war-weary world." On the next day he dwelt further on the same theme : "Though I do not at all like what is going on outside, I am not prepared to criticise and condemn that violence while I am in jail ; because I have got to criticise the Government's policy much more severely. If the Goverment are bent on goading people to

violence, they can succeed in their design. The masses are not angels, and are likely to be misled in the absence of leaders capable of advising them to adhere to non-violence. Nevertheless Governmental violence has been many times greater than popular violence. It would not be right for me to criticise from here the people alone. My own faith in non-violence has grown stronger, and there has been no change in my views on the subject except in one respect. I do not now say that non-violence can work only if there is a non-violent atmosphere in the country ; for I have now come to believe that the power of non-violence lies in its ability to work even in the midst of a conflagration."

"Had you been out, what would you have said about the violence of the people ?" Gandhi was asked the next day. "I would have had to say much more against the Government's violence than against that of the people. I can do so as a free man, but not while I am in prison. You should also know that I cannot express any opinion about events without a full inquiry. It is one thing to discuss whether a particular act can be considered non-violent and whether it is likely to help in the attainment of Swaraj. It is another thing to condemn the same act publicly. There ought to be a thorough inquiry prior to that. Had I been free, I would not only have criticised or condemned several things that have happened but would not have allowed them to happen and would have shown to the people a more effective method. It would have produced greater effect because it would have been purely non-violent. My conception of a struggle was different from what is taking place in the country today. But it is insufferable that those people who have tried for years past to tread the path of non-violence should be sought to be suppressed through the fiercest violence. If the Government grow mad out of anger and perpetrate unprecedented frightfulness against weak, unarmed men and women, and if in consequence the people out of sheer desperation are seized with frenzy and thoughtlessly commit untoward acts, *history will pronounce their violence to be non-violent* in comparison with the violence

of the Government, just as I wrote in *Harijan* (in 1939) that the violent resistance of Poland against the German aggression was almost non-violent."[104] (emphasis added)

This shows that Gandhi was not a stickler for the form of *ahiṃsā* ; he prized bravery and fearlessness as manly virtues and adhered to non-violence for it symbolized, according to him, the noblest expression of the greatest courage.

Moral Equivalent of War

The Catholic philosopher, Jacques Maritain, writes : "...there are two different orders of means of warfare (taken in the widest sense of the word), as there are two kinds of fortitude and courage, the courage that attacks and the courage that endures, the force of coercion or aggression and the force of patience, the force that inflicts suffering on others and the force that endures suffering inflicted on oneself. There you have two different keyboards that stretch along the two sides of our human nature, though the sounds they give are constantly intermingled ; opposing evil through attack and coercion—a way, which at the last extremity, leads to the shedding, if need be, of the blood of others ; and opposing evil through suffering and enduring—a way which, at the last extremity, leads to the sacrifice of one's own life. To the second keyboard the means of spiritual warfare belong."[105] He would like to call satyāgraha a "means of spiritual warfare."[106] According to Maritain, Gandhi's theory and technique of satyāgraha should be related to the Thomistic notion of courage in enduring. While he rightly stresses upon one essential element of satyāgraha and notes a fundamental similarity between war and satyāgraha, namely self-suffering—"the strongest of the strong" as Gandhi would call it—, he does not take into account the direct action or the 'aggressive' aspect of this technique. This element of direct action, with the stipulation of non-violence, however, is shared by satyāgraha in common with war. It is this similarity between Gandhi's non-violent resistance and the institution of war that demands close attention. But, for obvious limitations, it will not be

possible for us to make a detailed comparative study of the war-process and the satyāgraha-process. We would limit ourselves to broadly enumerating the fundamental similarities between the two methods of social action.

The great American psychologist, William James, wrote : "So far war has been the only force that can discipline a whole community and until an equivalent discipline is organized, I believe that war must have its way. But I have no serious doubt that the ordinary prides and shames of social man, once developed to a certain intensity, are capable of organizing such a moral equivalent as I have sketched, or some such other just as effective or skilful propagandism, and of opinion-making men seizing historic opportunities."[107]

So far as is known, Gandhi was acquainted neither with William James' essay on *The Moral Equivalent of War* (1910) nor with his *Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902). But he actually evolved what James demanded but failed to offer.

Gandhi in an article[108] outlining the origin and development of satyāgraha termed it as 'the moral equivalent of war'. "The term war is generally applied to armed conflict between population groups conceived of as organic unities..."[109] It is the symbolic expression for the 'violent' method of adjusting disputes, while satyāgaha is based on non-violence. The essential difference between war and satyāgraha, according to Prof. Nirmal Kumar Bose, amounts to this : while the former aims at coercion, the latter aims at conversion. In war one inflicts punishment upon the adversary, in satyāgraha one draws the maximum suffering on oneself, without a trace of bitterness against the opponent as a human being.[110] But it is war nevertheless. As the same learned authority says : "Satyagraha is not a substitute for war, it is war itself shorn of many of its ugly features and guided by a purpose nobler than we associate with destruction. It is an intensely heroic and chivalrous form of war."[111]

The common features between the war-process and the satyāgraha-process can be broadly outlined as follows :[112]

First, both are modes of social action aiming at the resolution of social conflict.

Secondly, both come into being when and where negotiation and arbitration fall short of solving disputes.

Underlying these two characteristics, common to both violence and non-violence, is the basic assumption that certain radical social changes cannot be brought about save by mass action capable or precipitating an emotional crisis, and that the humdrum everyday existence of human life needs shaking up in order that men may arrive at fateful decisions. Consequently, the issue must be successfully dramatized in order to arouse mass interest and mass enthusiasm preparatory to reaching a crucial decision. Non-violent direct action bases itself on the same principles of mass appeal and effectiveness of the resultant mass action as the tested ideology of war does.

Thirdly, satyāgraha, like war, lends itself to the training of soldiers and generals, to organization, discipline and strategy. One significant aspect of the strategy of satyāgraha is that, like war activity, it has both defensive and offensive side.

Fourthly, a fundamental similarity between war and satyāgraha lies in their identical conception of the source of power in suffering. "The heroic virtues of disdain of personal comforts, constant alertness, readiness to lose one's life for a cause transcending one's self" are forced upon the soldier by the exigencies of battle ; yet, these virtues give meaning and add colour to life by the compulsion of an overriding loyalty. In the enunciation of William James, self-imposed poverty and a voluntary renunciation of wants are conducive to heroic virtues not one whit inferior to the martial virtues.[113] Gandhi demonstrated the validity of James' thesis.[114]

The fifth characteristic common to both war and satyāgraha lies in what Sridharani called 'romance'—a sense of chivalry and a spirit of adventure.

The sixth and final fundamental likeness of satyāgraha to war lies in the former's capacity to be an organized institution even at the time of peace. James proposed an 'army against

nature'. Similar was Gandhi's suggestion for raising a permanent corps of volunteers like the Hindusthānī Sevā Dal, Peace Brigades, etc.

Satyāgraha has these six effective and practicable attributes of war. It is unnecessary to add that there are equally fundamental differences between the two methods for resolving social conflicts. We have already seen above that the essential difference between war and satyāgraha is that while the former adopts coercion, the latter advocates persuasion. Here we face a controversial point as to whether satyāgraha contains the element of coercion—non-violent, of course—or not. Before trying to judge this question, let us try to follow the method as applied in satyāgraha, a little bit closely—though not in detail but in broad outline—which, we believe, will better clarify our understanding.

Technique of Satyāgraha

There are different forms of satyāgraha. Any of the several forms may be employed in a satyāgraha campaign. These which were most commonly employed during the freedom struggle in India under Gandhi's leadership were non-co-operation and civil disobedience. Constructive programme is a positive aspect of satyāgraha in action and is inseparably and integrally connected with civil resistance-action. A brief note will be added in a subsequent section about this relationship.

Non-co-operation may include strike, *hartāl*, boycott and resignation of offices and titles. In principle, "non-co-operation is a protest against an unwitting and unwilling participation in evil."[115]

Civil disobedience is a form of non-violent rebellion. By refusing to obey the *unmoral laws* of the state, the civil resister denies the existence of the established authority. He may refuse to pay taxes, he may refuse to recognize the authority of the state in his daily intercourse. One by one, or simultaneously, the important laws and decrees of the state are violated, so that eventually the whole edifice of the

wholly or largely unjust state is broken. In doing all this. he never uses force and never resists force when it is used against him. In fact, the satyāgrahī invites imprisonment and other uses of force against himself. This he does because, and when, he finds the bodily freedom he seemingly enjoys to be an intolerable burden.[116]

Especial mention should be made of fasting and its place in satyāgraha. One may profitably refer to Prof. Nirmal Kumar Bose's study on the subject.[117] Gandhi, on several occasions, resorted to the method of fasting, even unto death.* Sometimes the fast was undertaken "to come face to face with God by crucifying the flesh", as he put it. Nothwithstanding its claim as being an exclusively private affair, such fasts of Gandhi left deep impact on public life because of the position he enjoyed.

There is another kind of fasting adopted as a method of satyāgraha, the object of which is to appeal to the good sense of the person against whom satyāgraha is directed. As Gandhi wrote: "I have been driven to the conclusion that fasting unto death is an integral part of satyagraha programme, and it is the greatest and most effective weapon in its armoury under given circumstances.

"The object is always to evoke the best in him. ...Fasting under proper circumstances is such an appeal *par excellence*."[118]

Gandhi frequently wrote on the dangers of considering any fast a part of satyāgraha. The majority of fasts, judged by his standard, he noted, were nothing more than "hunger strikes undertaken without previous preparation and adequate thought."[119] He repeatedly warned against the indiscriminate use of this method and was well aware that "Often there

* William Robert Miller in his *Non-violence : A Christian Interpretation* distinguishes between 'voluntarily accepted suffering' and 'self-imposed suffering such as the hunger strike and the fast'. The latter type, according to him, is often coercive rather than redemptive. He maintains that Gandhi's repeated fast unto death "is an implicit suicide threat... Far from being convinced of Gandhi's goodwill when he undertook such fasts, the British regarded them as an acute form of blackmail. On more than one occasion they were spurred to action by such fasts, not because they were converted but because they feared the repercussions if they were blamed for Gandhi's death."—p. 174 ; also p. 38.

is violence behind such a fasting."[120] Although Gandhi believed that "The fast is a most efficacious weapon in the armoury of non-violence",[121] he recognized that it could be used only with utmost discretion.

"Fasting is a fiery weapon. It has its own science. No one, as far as I am aware, has a perfect knowledge of it. Unscientific experimentation with it is bound to be harmful to the one who fasts, and it may even harm the cause espoused. No one who has not earned the right to do so should, therefore, use this weapon. A fast may only be undertaken by him who is associated with the person against whom he fasts. The latter must be directly connected with the purpose for which the fast is being undertaken."[122]

Indiscriminate fasts apart, there is difference between fasts and fasts. One may recall here the historic fasts of the Irish patriot Terence MacSwiney and the Indian revolutionary Jatin Das, or that of Pandit Ramrakha.* These fasts "of an equally high order", as Prof. Bose aptly describes, distinguished themselves from satyāgrahic fasts in their intention.

Fasting should not be considered a form of satyāgraha in the sense of mass resistance. It may be used as a specific weapon in specific circumstances as an adjunct to other forms. In representative or individual satyāgrahas this method, however, may be adopted. But the emphasis should always be placed on group action. The efficacy of fasting as a method should be related to the fundamental point of developing the self-intiative and self-consciousness of the masses and launching action on a collective level so as to reach a satyāgrahic solution of the conflict-situation.

The Essentials

From the experience of satyāgraha campaigns conducted under the direct or not-too-indirect guidance of Gandhi, a basic pattern emerges. As has been referred to earlier,

* I. N. Steinberg has called the hunger strike "the sharpest weapon in the arsenal of the disarmed."—*In the Workshop of the Revolution*, Rinehart & Co., Inc., 1953, p. 167.

authentic studies have been made on the subject. We do not propose to write a detailed note on this topic. We shall just present a bare outline, in a summary form, covering (1) fundamental rules governing the campaign, (2) the code of discipline, and (3) the steps through which the campaign is to be pursued.

Fundamental Rules[123]

1. Only those who suffer a wrong should offer resistance against it. Do not count on outside aid, it fails in the last resort. In the final heat, one has to rely on oneself or the justice of one's cause, or on Truth and God, as some would prefer to say.

2. Adequate propaganda is an integral part of satyāgraha.

3. Civil resistance should be resorted to only after all other attempts at honourable settlement, including an offer of impractical arbitration, have falled.

4. The satyāgrahī should preserve the initiative in his own hands, and not allow it to pass into the hands of his opponent.

He must also refuse to be led by the masses against the promptings of his own judgement.

5. Keep the demands low but consistent with Truth and Justice. "In aiming beyond our capacity we are likely to lose all." (*Harijan*, 10. 6. 39, p. 153)

6. Satyāgraha should be progressive in character.

7. There should be no impatience, no hurry, no bluff and no attempt to cover inner weakness from oneself. "Non-co-operation is not a movement of brag, bluster, or bluff. It is a test of our sincerity. It requires solid and silent self-sacrifice." (*Young India*, 12. 1. 21, p. 13.)

8. Always seek avenues of co-operation with the adversary on honourable terms. The end of non-violent 'war' is always an agreed solution in conformity with the claims of justice and true human welfare.

9. In a negotiation, do not surrender essentials, sacrifice non-essentials. Be prepared to go to the farthest length in

self-suffering in defence of the essential. Before settlement, there must be agreement on fundamentals. Keep one angle of the square right, the rest will follow.

10. When in doubt, apply the following test: if there is a feeling of expansion you are on the right track, if of contraction you are likely to be wrong.

Code of discipline[124]

In 1930 Gandhi elaborated the code of discipline for volunteers as follows:

As an Individual

1. A satyāgrahī, i.e., a civil resister will harbour no anger.

2. He will suffer the anger of the opponent.

3. In so doing he will put up with assaults from the opponent, never retaliate; but he will not submit, out of fear of punishment or the like, to any order given in anger.

4. When any person in authority seeks to arrest a civil resister, he will voluntarily submit to the arrest, and he will not resist the attachment or removal of his own property, if any, when it is sought to be confiscated by the authorities.

5. If a civil resister has any property in his possession as a trustee, he will refuse to surrender it, even though in defending it he might lose his life. He will, however, never retaliate.

6. Non-retaliation includes swearing and cursing.

7. Therefore a civil resister will never insult his opponent, and therefore also not take part in many of the newly coined cries which are contrary to the spirit of *ahiṃsā*.

8. A civil resister will not salute the Union Jack, nor will he insult it or the officials, English or Indian.

9. In course of the struggle if anyone insults an official or commits an assault upon him, a civil resister will protect such official or officials from the insult or attack even at the risk of his life.

As a Prisoner

10. As a prisoner, a civil resister, will behave courteously towards prison officials and will observe all such discipline of the prison as is not contrary to self-respect ; as for instance, whilst he will salaam officials in the usual manner, he will not perform any humiliating gyrations and refuse to shout 'Victory to *Sarkar*' or the like. He will take cleanly cooked and cleanly served food, which is not contrary to his religion, and will refuse to take food insultingly served or served in unclean vessels.

11. A civil resister will make no distinction between an oridinary prisoner and himself, will in no way regard himself as superior to the rest, nor will he ask for any privilege that may not be necessary for keeping his body in good health and condition. He is entitled to ask for such privileges as may be required for his physical or spiritual well-being.

12. A civil resister may not fast against absence of privileges whose denial or absence does not involve any injury to one's self-respect.

As a Unit

13. A civil resister will joyfully obey all the orders issued by the leader of the corps, whether they please him or not.

14. He will carry out orders in the first instance even though they appear to him insulting, inimical or foolish, and then appeal to the higher authority. He is free before joining to determine the capacity of the corps to satisfy him, but after he has joined it, it becomes a duty to submit to its discipline, irksome or otherwise. If the sum total of the energy of the corps appears to a member to be improper or immoral, he has a right to sever his connexion, but being within it, he has no right to commit a breach of discipline.

15. No civil resister is to expect maintenance for his dependents. It would be an accident if any such provision is made. A civil resister entrusts his dependents to the care of God. Even in ordinary warfare wherein hundreds of thousands give themselves up to it, they are able to arrange no previous

provision. How much more, then, should such be the case in satyāgraha ? It is the universal experience that at such times hardly anybody is left to starve.

In Communal Fights

16. No civil resister will intentionally become a cause of communal quarrels.

17. In the event of any such outbreak, he will not take sides, but he will assist only that party which is demonstrably in the right. Being a Hindu he will be generous towards Mussulmans and others, and will sacrifice himself in the attempt to save non-Hindus form a Hindu attack. And if the attack is from the other side, he will not participate in any retaliation but will give his life in protecting Hindus.

18. He will, to the best of his ability, avoid every occasion that may give rise to communal quarrels.

19. If there is a procession of satyāgrahīs they will do nothing that would wound the religious susceptibilites of any community, and they will not take part in any other processions that are likely to wound such susceptibilites.

Steps In a Satyāgraha campaign[125]

1. *Negotiation and arbitration.* Every effort to resolve the conflict or redress the grievance through established channels must be exhausted before further steps are undertaken.

2. *Preparation of the group for direct action.* Immediately upon recognizing the existence of a conflict-situation which might lead to direct action, motives are to be carefully examined, exercises in self-discipline initiated, and the fullest discussion launched within the group regarding issues at stake, appropriate procedures to be undertaken, the circumstances of the opponents, the climate of public opinion, etc. This step often included, for Indian satyāgrahīs, purificatory fasting.

3. *Agitation.* This step includes an active propaganda campaign together with such demonstrations as mass-meetings, parades, slogan-shouting.

4. *Issuing of an ultimatum.* A final strong appeal to the opponent should be made explaining what further steps will be taken if no agreement can be reached. The wording and manner of presentation of the ultimatum should offer the widest scope for agreement, allowing for face-saving on the part of the opponent, and should present a constructive solution to the problem.

5. *Economic boycott and forms of strike.* Picketing may be widely employed, together with continued demonstrations and education of the public. Sitting *dharṇā* (a form a of sit-down strike) may be employed, as non-violent labour strikes, and attempts to organize a general strike.

6. *Non-co-operation.* Depending upon the nature of the issues at stake, such action as non-payment of taxes, boycott of schools and other public institutions, ostracism, or even voluntary exile may be initiated.

7. *Civil disobedience.* Great care should be exercised in the selection of laws to be contravened. Such laws should be either central to the grievance, or symbolic.

8. *Usurping of the functions of government.* Shridharani called this 'assertive satyagraha'. Fullest preparations are necessary to make this step effective.

9. *Parallel government.* The establishment of parallel functions should grow out of step (8), and these should be strengthened in such a way that the greatest possible co-operation from the public can be obtained.

Constructive Programme and Civil Disobedience

We have observed earlier that constructive programme is a concomitant of civil resistance. A close examination of the relations between the former and the latter is necessary since it has been assumed in many quarters that the programme of constructive work is a 'reformist' one designed to contain the revolutionary energy of the masses. Literalist interpretation of constructive programme and undue one-track emphasis upon the same at the cost of building up mass resistance from quarters reputed for their loyalty to Gandhi may have contributed to an

extent for such an opinion to be formed. One may or may not like the idea of constructive programme, as conceived by Gandhi, to be an integral part of mass resistance-action. That depends upon one's concept of revolution and the way of its building up. But to dismiss it outright as a form of 'reformism' betrays subjective prejudice. One must try to study the programme with as much objectivity as possible. It would be worthwhile to try to understand the basic idea that drove Gandhi to enunciate this programme and the relationship that he conceived to be existing between these two forms of action.

Gandhi wrote : "...my handling of Civil Disobedience without the constructive programme will be like a paralyzed hand attempting to lift a spoon."[126]

The idea of simultaneous develoment of constructive programme and mass resistance-action is something new in the history of political theory and action. It has generally been taken for granted that the positive aspect of constructive building-up can only follow the destruction of the old order. It is here that Gandhi struck a different note. We shall have occasion elsewhere to see that he wanted to build up the new order right from the immediate present. And there he differed with social actionists of other persuasions.

Leaving aside the fundamental premise, let us for the present try to place Gandhi's constructive programme in the situational context. Gandhi realized that to an inert people having no awareness of their condition, and having no self-reliance, any tall talk of resistance would fall flat. Resistance to achieve its end must be based on the strength generated from below which means that the people must reach such a stage of development as to determine their own. They must have self-reliance, cause-consciousness, self-initiative and discipline. People must overcome their own weaknesses which alone will enable them to throw themselves in bigger resistance-battles. Constructive programme, in short, is a platform of action for the building up of strength of people at the bottom. As Gandhi wrote :

"Civil Disobedience, mass or individual, is an aid to constructive effort and is a full substitute for armed revolt.

Training is necessary as well for Civil Disobedience as for armed revolt. Only the ways are different. Action in either case takes place only when occasion demands. Training for military revolt means learning the use of arms ending perhaps in the atomic bomb. For Civil Disobedience it means the Constructive Programme."[127]

The connexion between civil disobedience and constructive programme has been explained in detail by Prof. Nirmal Kumar Bose.[128] One may refer to his study on the subject for a clear exposition of the connexion between the two aspects of Gandhi's technique. We would rather present, in a summarized form, the uses of constructive programme, as adapted from the same source.

(a) The masses gain an idea of exploitation-free social and economic order which they are going to build up through their own efforts. It gives them something worth striving for.

(b) It generates the type of self-reliance and internal cohesion which prove useful also in times of non-violent resistance.

(c) It gives staying power in a long-drawn struggle ; so preserves morale.

(d) A bond of trust is created between the active civil resisters and the average citizen through constructive work pursued continuously in peace time. This trust proves to be of immense help in moments of national crisis ; then the satyāgrahī finds himself in a position to channel the upsurge of the masses along effective, non-violent lines.

Satyāgraha and External Aggression

Gandhi himself never pursued any practical experiments in the sphere of international conflict, and as such the room for speculation about the potentialities and limitations of non-violence is "almost limitless", as Prof. W. K. Hancock puts it.[129] Leaving aside the question of speculation, let us try to follow the method of resistance as outlined by Gandhi against external aggression.

Since Gandhi considered satyāgraha to be a weapon equally operative in any conflict-situation—intra-national and

international—he suggested what may be called the satyāgrahic method of resistance to invasion from outside. It may be recalled here that Gandhi suggested the idea of "the human wall" when confronted with the frequent question from many quarters during World War II: "How would you resist non-violently if the Japanese army marched on India through Assam and Bengal?" His prescription to the Abyssinians, the Czechs, the Poles, the English and other victims of aggression was to refuse to fight and yet to refuse to yield to the usurper.[130] Refusal to yield means not to bow to the supremacy of the victor and not to help him to achieve his object.[131] He advised the Chinese to pursue the method of non-violent resistance against Japanese invasion.[132] In support of his argument, Gandhi referred to Shelley's celebrated lines from *The Mask of Anarchy*, "Ye are many, they are few", etc.*

A general pattern of non-violent resistance to invasion evolves out of Gandhi's many writings on the subject in the columns of *Harijan*. A brief outline of the satyāgrahic method is sketched below.[133]

1. The first step in defence should consist of sending a a band of satyāgrahīs who attempt to face the aggressors, talk

* Stand ye calm and resolute,
Like a forest close and mute,
With folded arms and looks which are
Weapons of unvanquished war.

And if then the tyrants dare,
Let them ride among you there,
Slash, and stab, and maim and hew,—
What they like, that let them do.

With folded arms and steady eyes,
And little fear, and less surprise,
Look upon them as they slay
Till their rage has died away.

Then they will return with shame
To the place from which they came,
And the blood thus shed will speak
In hot blushes on their cheek.

Rise like Lions after slumber
In unvanquishable number—
Shake your chains to earth like dew
Which in sleep had fallen on you—
Ye are many—they are few.

to them, if possible, even while they are prepared to be mowed down, yet not lift a finger in order to hurt the 'enemy' in so-called self-defence.

2. After this, the 'enemy' may advance to 'occupy' the land. There is to be no scorched-earth policy. But the satyāgrahī country should be prepared to live peacefully with members of the 'occupational force' on its own terms. The latter must be made to feel that they are welcome to live as workers and equals sharing in the toil and upkeep of the satyāgrahī's social system.

3. Otherwise, the satyāgrahī refuses to submit and disobeys orders, but does not in any way make the occupational force feel that their lives are threatened.

4. If the courage and determination of the satyāgrahī is strong enough, members of the enemy camp will start thinking. This is particularly likely if they are not afraid or on the defensive. When this operation begins, the effects of indoctrination to which they have hitherto been subjected will begin to wear out. The process is accentuated if, as pointed out above, the satyāgrahī is prepared to accept whatever is based on 'truth' in his opponent's point of view.

5. Gandhi's ideal was to convert even the General on the other side, as much as the common soldier who worked under that General, to his point of view. If the worst happened and the General proved intractable, his hope was that, by the conversion of the common soldier, the evil represented by the General would become isolated. And this would constitute the highest achievement that is humanly possible in real life by means of collective non-violence.

The Nature of Satyāgraha : A survey of opinions

We have seen above that the professed aim of satyāgraha is to persuade the opponent, to evoke the best in him and consequently to convert him, and as such there is no place of coercion in satyāgraha. The whole philosophy of satyāgraha is based on the fundamental assumption that man's nature is not beyond redemption and is perfectible. Satyāgraha is

active, constructive and synthesizing. But it is at the same time assertive. What does this assertion or 'aggression' amount to ?

Scholars and interpreters differ in their opinion as to the nature of satyāgraha. A good number of them—all of them are not hostile critics, on the contrary, some are pronouncedly sympathetic—have termed satyāgraha as a form of non-violent coercion. We shall not try in this present study to judge the question whether coercion itself is intrinsically moral or immoral. We shall limit ourselves to considering the question as to whether satyāgraha contains elements of coercion or not. Important contributions being made on this point earlier, only a brief survey is deemed advisable.

Kripalani denies any motive of coercion in non-violent resistance.[134]

Dr. B. S. Sharma observes : "If we represent the resistance through 'Satyagraha' by the phrase 'moral coercion' then it gives the impression that 'Satyagraha' is indistinguishable from violent resistance because of the association of the word coercion with violence. It would be better, therefore, to describe it as 'moral pressure' as Gandhi has suggested."[135]

The term 'coercion' is generally understood in terms of the application of physical force as its primary characteristic. But as has been defined above, it can be physical as well as moral or psychological.

In a pioneer study on the subject, Clarence Marsh Case contrasts violent and non-violent coercion in the following terms :

"The non-violent coercion is, and ought to be, a two-edged sword. In other words, it causes, and it is well that it should cause, inconvenience and suffering to those who wield it, as well as to those against whom it is invoked. In this it is exactly contrary to violent methods ; for a principal reason accounting for the appalling growth of terrorism in modern times, is the unfortunate fact that the development of fire-arms and high explosives carries no automatic check and penalty for all who use them. As for the methods of non-

violent coercion, particularly the strike and the boycott, the public usually stands more or less in a position to determine which way the blow shall fall, that is, which party to the controversy shall suffer the greater loss. It is well that this should be so, for it is not in the interest of the general good that any group of men should exert irresponsible power...we hold that there is a most vital, salutary, and socially necessary connexion between the open, truthful, self-denying spirit of passive resistance and the *constructive* use of non-violent coercion in any of its forms...."[136]

Prof. Case denies a contradiction in the term non-violent coercion, and he comments, at the outset of his essay, that the combination of *non-violent* and *coercion* "is not the outcome of a preconceived notion, but represents a working arrangement, to which the writer came naturally during the course of a prolonged effort to find separately the working efficiency of these two principles of human conduct, neither of which was found to function rightly alone."[137]

Dr. Bondurant approvingly quotes Prof. Case and argues :

"Despite the protestations of a few followers of Gandhi that satyagraha is always persuasive and never coercive the method does contain a positive element of coercion. Non-cooperation, boycott, strike—all of these tools which may be used in satyagraha involve an element of compulsion which may effect a change on the part of an opponent which initially was contrary to his will and he may suffer from the indirect results of these actions. But there remains a significant difference between non-violent and violent coercion." ("a difference of such great degree that it is almost a difference of kind.")

"Satyagraha allows for several stages of winning over an opponent. The first stage is characterized by persuasion through reason. The subsequent stages enter the realm of persuasion through suffering wherein the satyagrahi attempts to dramatize the issues at stake and to get through to the opponent's unprejudiced judgement so that he may willingly come again into a level where he may be presuaded through

rational argument. Finally, if persuasion by reason or by suffering does not succeed, the satyagrahi may resort to non-violent coercion characterized by such tools as non-cooperation or civil disobedience."[138]

In a recent article on 'The Nature and Methods of Non-violent Coercion',[139] Anthony De Crespigny attempts a scientific analysis of the concept of non-violent coercion. Non-violent coercion is defined by Crespigny as an attempt to limit or destroy freedom of choice which does not involve the threat or use of physical force, whether directed against persons or against property. This non-violent coercion may be both direct and indirect.

Reinhold Niebuhr does not draw any absolute line of demarcation between violent and non-violent coercion. But he holds it to be important to make an analysis of the issues involved in the choice of methods of coercion in the social process and refers to Gandhi's non-violent resistance in this regard. In his opinion :

"The distinguishing marks of violent coercion and conflict are usually held to be its intent to destroy either life or property. This distinction is correct if consequences are not confused with intent. Non-violent conflict and coercion may also result in the destruction of life or property and they usually do. The difference is that destruction is not the intended but the inevitable consequence of non-violent coercion. The chief difference between violence and non-violence is not in the degree of destruction which they cause, though the difference is usually considerable, but in the aggressive character of the one and the negative character of the other. Non-violence is essentially non-co-operation.

"Non-co-operation, in other words, results in social consequenees not totally dissimilar from those of violence. The differences are important ; but before considering them it is necessary to emphasise the similarities and to insist that non-violence does coerce and destroy.

"The use of truth-force or soul-force, in the purer and more exact meaning of those words, means an appeal to the reason and goodwill of an opponent in a social struggle.

This may be regarded as a type of resistance, but it is not physical coercion. It belongs in the realm of education. It places no external restraints upon the object of its discipline. It may avail itself of a very vivid and dramatic method of education. It may dramatise the suffering of the oppressed, as for instance Mr. Gandhi's encouragement to his followers to endure the penalties of their civil disobedience 'long enough to appeal to the sympathetic chord in the governors and the lawmakers.' But it is still education and not coercion."

Niebuhr adds that "education may contain coercive elements."[140]

Arthur Moore criticizes the high spiritual claim made for the theory of non-violent non-co-operation, "because it drew a spiritual distinction between physical and mental violence." According to him, "It is a method of fighting which is open to unarmed people, and is on a par with the boycott and the strike, which are indeed part of its technique...But it is not a distinctively spiritual weapon any more than is armed rebellion or war. ...Bluntly stated, the economic object of boycotting Lancashire goods was to provide work, wages and food for one set of people in India and to deprive another set in England of work, wages and food. Between starving and killing there is no notable moral difference."[141]

Roland H. Bainton says : "...non-violent resistance has two objectives. The first is to coerce the opponent into compliance through pressures mainly economic. Gandhi's boycott of British cotton goods was of this order. It differed no whit in principle from any other boycott and resembled also the strike as a weapon. Non-violent resistance of this sort is preferable to war because it is more amenable to moral control, and less likely to produce those passions which impede and preclude a generous peace. The other object is to persuade. Gandhi's fasts sought to persuade his followers to be disciplined and his opponents to yield."[142]

Dr. K. Satchidananda Murthy alleges that the Gandhian technique was not a case of "genuine non-violence" since it "cannot be founded on national interests, or patriotism, but only on universalism" and that "the desire to overwhelm and

coerce the minds of opponents seems to have been at work in many of the Gandhian movements and fasts."[143]

Prof. Morris-Jones observes : "It constitutes, of course, a form of coercion or force—in the sense that it is designed to bring about change in actual political positions. But its non-violent style is intended to make the change as a spontaneous consequence of changes in the minds of men. Its purpose is not capitulation and conquest but genuine agreement. Yet to describe it simply as a form of persuasion is to omit a great deal. Persuasion for one thing tends to be aimed in one direction only—against the opponent—whereas satyagraha operates to at least the same extent on those who participate in the movement. The two effects are, of course, related : the rulers change their views about the ruled in part because the ruled have really changed ; it is different to continue to despise men who have ceased to be despicable. As Gandhi once put it : 'We—the people—make the rulers what they are.' Moreover, persuasion has an air of the study circle and a movement of intellectual agreement—whereas satyagraha appeals beyond the head to the conscience."[144]

An eminent British Marxist theoretician, Dr. John Lewis, who frankly acknowledges the legitimacy of social coercion, distinguishes Gandhi's satyāgraha from absolutist pacifism. According to him, the strength of non-violent methods does not lie in their pacifism, but in their value as methods of coercion under certain conditions.

Speaking of Gandhi's technique of non-violence, he comments as follows :

"It is a form of compulsion, and as such will arouse resentment, especially where the non-violent resisters have aroused public opinion, and thus beaten their opponents. R. B. Gregg even argues that the authorities will give way because they *fear* non-violent resistance. This also suggests that its primary aim is not the conversion of its opponents at all, but their coercion.

"Non-violent resistance may be useful tactics under certain conditions, but it partakes of the nature of war. Moral coercion

becomes, in fact, a form of violence, even if it is not physical violence."[145]

In a discussion about Gandhi's non-violent resistance, Jawaharlal Nehru posed the question, 'Conversion or Compulsion', and himself gave the answer as follows :

"Whatever the motives of conversion behind it, in practice it has been a powerful weapon of compulsion as well, though that compulsion is exercised in the most civilised and least objectionable manner."[146]

He added : "...is the line between violence and non-violence, compulsion and conversion, so obvious ? Often enough, moral force is a far more terrible coercive factor than physical violence."[147]

Dr. Krishnalal Sridharani contended the thesis that satyāgraha is a form of non-violent coercion though he acknowledged that "Satyagraha does contain an aspect of coercion, if in a somewhat modified form." He argued that the word 'coercion' has numerous connotations, and there is also in it a trace of punishment. The self-purifying and self-suffering phase of satyāgraha, on the other hand, does not allow punishment to be a part of the compulsion of non-violent direct action. Hereon perhaps is founded, he argued, Gandhi's refusal to acknowledge the element of coercion as a part of his ideology of non-violence.

He continued to add : "It is misleading, therefore, to describe Satyagraha as a form of non-violent coercion as Mr. C. M. case has done in his book bearing that title. But it is equally misleading, on the other hand, to call Satyagraha a pure and simple process of conversion as Gandhi and some of his followers would have it. There is an element of what, for want of a better term, we shall call *compulsion* in it, if not of coercion, since the latter implies revenge and punishment."[148]

Dr. Paul F. Power concurs with the view of Sridharani.[149]

According to Richard Gregg, "Non-violent resistance acts as a sort of moral *jiu-jitsu*. The non-violence and goodwill of the victim act like the lack of physical opposition by the user of the physical *jiu-jitsu*, to cause the attacker to lose his

moral balance. He suddenly and unexpectedly loses the moral support which the usual violent resistance of most victims would render him."[150]

Sum-up

As a technique of action, satyāgraha employs force. But the force employed in satyāgraha is not physical but moral. A moral weight is placed upon the adversary so that he yields. But the intent is never to score a victory over the opponent but to arrive at the truth. From the point of view of the satyāgrahī, the technique is adopted to persuade the opponent and to wean him from error. No serious difference exists among the majority of the interpreters about the moral sincerity and nobility of Gandhi in his adoption of the technique. The difference lies in the assessment of the effect or consequence of the 'moral pressure' exerted on the person or the group against whom satyāgraha is directed. Moral pressure in certain circumstances, especially when employed on a mass level, is not so far removed from compulsion. Gandhi, it may be recalled, actually used the word 'compel' in his earlier writings.[151] One reviewer[152] suggests that the use of the word 'compel' is unfortunate. We cannot agree to this opinion. The assertive nature of satyāgraha is best expressed by the term 'compel'. And is compulsion very much different from coercion, if the term is understood in its wider sense, as has been defined above ? Is this not a case of semantic quibble ? The dictionary meaning of the term 'coerce' is to compel, to constrain. Nehru interchangingly used the terms, coercion and compulsion. To draw a line of distinction between the two terms, as had been drawn by Sridharani, may be justified on the ground that the odius connotation of coercion should not be associated with a moral weapon like satyāgraha, which should be sharply distinguished from the coercive war. It may be argued that coercion being usually associated with employment of physical force should be avoided in an exposition of satyāgraha. But in a scientific analysis the distinction between the two terms should not be overemphasized.

To close the discussion. We would like to observe that satyāgraha, while expressing the ideal of love and the spirit of moral goodwill, contains an element of coercion which is wholly dissimilar from overt expression of physical violence, 'coercion whose sting is drawn by its non-violent qualifications.'

Satyāgraha : a universal panacea ?

Gandhi considered satyāgraha to be universally applicable. Commentators like Bondurant[153] and Sridharani[154] share this view. But on this point there are differences of opinion which should be taken note of in this study. This section shall consider three questions, namely (a) indispensability of the traditional Hindu background for the effective functioning of satyāgraha ; (b) the applicability of satyāgraha in a democratic political set-up and (c) the operation of satyāgraha in a totalitarian regime.

Satyāgraha and Hindu cultural background

It has sometimes been pointed out that Gandhi's satyāgraha held an appeal for the Hindu masses since they inherited the age-old tradition of *satya*, *ahiṃsā* and self-suffering and, moreover, the Hindus generally were pacific by temperament. It was only in such a cultural background, so runs the argument, that satyāgraha could operate. True that Gandhi preached his message among a people who were largely familiar with these notions and the response was more or less immediate since they understood the language of the leader and the symbols he used in conveying his message. But to judge satyāgraha as a technique in terms of cultural background alone would be a mistake. It is common knowledge that satyāgraha was conducted in a cultural setting different from that of the Hindu society. We do refer to the satyāgraha in the North Western Frontier Province.[155] The *Khudai Khidmatgars* under Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan surpassed the satyāgrahīs in other parts of India in patience, suffering and non-violence. If experience be any guide, then the inference

becomes too obvious. The theoretical conclusion that emerges from empirical case studies is this : satyāgraha as a technique pure and simple does not require the Hindu tradition for its adoption and successful operation.

There is no agreement among the reviewers of Gandhi's philosophy and technique as to the applicability of satyāgraha in the West.

Dr. Sridharani held that "Satyagraha, once consciously and deliberately adopted, has more fertile fields in which to grow and flourish in the West than in the Orient."[156]

Aldous Huxley remarked : "In the years ahead it seems possible that *satyagraha* may take root in the West—not primarily as the result of any 'change of heart', but simply because it provides the masses, especially in the conquered countries, with their only practicable form of political action. The Germans of the Ruhr and Palatinate resorted to *satyagraha* against the French in 1923. The movement was spontaneous ; philosophically, ethically and organizationally, it had not been prepared for. It was for this reason that it finally broke down. But it lasted long enough to prove that a Western people — and a people more thoroughly indoctrinated with militarism than any other—was perfectly capable of nonviolent direct action, involving the cheerful acceptance of sacrificial suffering."[157] To him, satyāgraha appeared as "humanity's practical substitute for hopeless revolution and self-stultifying or suicidial war."

Vincent Sheean holds a different opinion. According to him : "Clearly the Western world is not by temperament, social and economic condition, philosophical adaptation or mass-consciousness in any way prepared for *satyagraha*."[158]

The recent Civil Rights struggle of the Negroes in the United States which is non-violent in form has given rise to a lot of discussion about the nature of this movement. Some people believe that it is strictly Gandhian, while others voice a dissenting note maintaining that this may be direct action, this may even be non-violent direct action, but it is not satyāgraha proper.

Dr. Bondurant notes that many student demonstrations organized in support of the Civil Rights Movement in the US illustrate *Duragraha*, not satyāgraha. And she narrates her personal experience of one such demonstration in support of her argument.[159]

Another famous American, Dr. Homer A. Jack, notes : "...in a real sense, though not in a perfect sense, Martin Luther King and some other Negroes in the American South are working out new ways—not essentially better ways, but new ways—of using love and not hate to correct social injustice."[160]

As we have no direct knowledge of the operation of the Negro movement, we do not consider it to be prudent to pronounce any definitive judgement on this issue. But all the same, we maintain that it is a new attempt at non-violent method among a people who do not share the traditional Hindu background.

Satyāgraha and Democracy

The second point relates to the question as to whether satyāgraha has any relevance where political authority is democratic. It has been made out that satyāgraha had its efficacy in a political set-up where the people of a country were politically subjugated and racially humiliated and that it is not needed in an effective democracy.[161] That this weapon should not be used against a government put into power democratically by the popular vote has been the contention of politicians entrenched in power. One may even quote Gandhi* to uphold this point of view. We submit that this warning was uttered by him in a particular context. No fundamental importance should be attached to a statement made in a specific circumstance. According to Gandhi, civil resistance is the inherent right of a citizen and is a sovereign remedy that

* "People in a democracy should be satisfied with drawing the government's attention to mistakes, if any. They could remove the Government if they wished to. But they should not obstruct them by agitating against them. Ours is not a foreign government having a mighty army and navy to support them. They have to derive their strength from the people." —*Democracy : Real and Deceptive*, Comp. R. K. Prabhu, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1961, pp. 51-2.

lies in the hands of the people.[162] This concept runs all through his political theory. Gandhi's political theory and action can only be appreciated if this note of defiance of evil and resistance to any irresponsible authority—irrespective of political forms—which tramples on the individual's liberty and freedom is duly recognized.

Can Satyāgraha operate in a totalitarian state ?

Gandhi believed that satyāgraha, if properly applied, would always meet with a high degree of success. He appears to have believed, too, that it could have been used in such concrete cases as the opposition of the Jews in Germany. His faith in satyāgraha was unshakable since he believed that the stoniest heart could be melted if the method was applied in a genuine spirit of love. The theory of satyāgraha posits some humaneness in the opponent. The question of the success of operation of satyāgraha in a totalitarian regime is as speculative as controversial. We do not have any direct empirical evidence on which to base an answer to this hypothetical question. Varying opinions have been given on this question. We shall attempt a brief survey of opinions which may help in stimulating fresh thinking on the subject.

Jacques Maritain says : "Gandhi's successes were possible only against the background of the relative freedom granted to colonials by the British administration, both by virtue of an old liberal aristocratic tradition and a mistaken cynical belief—as has been rightly remarked*—in a possible utilization of Gandhi. The fate to which the inner logics of a totalitarian State tends is not a revolution which finally gives control to the people, but an ultimate disintegration by a slow rotting of human conscience within it."[163]

Karl Jaspers points out : "His example, however great in its suprapolitical seriousness, is impossible as a signpost for our political action. We cannot follow the concrete method of a kind of politics that could succeed only in the atmosphere of British rule and for the limited purpose of Indian liberation.

* George Orwell, 'Reflections on Gandhi', *Partisan Review*, January, 1949.

For the extremity of present world-wide realities Gandhi gives us no answer.

"In the struggles against totalitarianism, Gandhi's procedure would not be a political way but a way to certain doom. Every sacrifice would be secret, rendered without publicity, untouchable in its metaphysical substance to be sure, but unknown to men. Because no echoes would reach the public, no political consequences would result. Against a terror that knows no restriction by legal or conscientious qualms, sacrifice is futile in so far as it remains outside the communication of human activities.

"Against total violence there is no help in less violence, nor in non-violence. Only one limit is conceivable: the destructive engine would cease to obey if the human being in it were touched by the power of conscience. This is a hope and not an impossibility, but it is contingent upon the unfolding of suprapolitical reasons in every individual. Gandhi demonstrated the power of the suprapolitical in the situation in which he was active, but the contents and methods are neither transferable nor exemplary."[164]

P. Spratt comments: "Though India is a political autocracy, it has hitherto been an autocracy leavened by nineteenth-century liberalism. Satyagraha could develop only in such conditions."[165]

Prof. Hancock in his study lays emphasis on the constitutional aspect of the regime in which the non-violent method is applied and on the personal aspect of the combatants involved in struggle. He refers to "something within Smuts himself which made him receptive of this public opinion and sympathetic towards the man who was inciting it." He says that both in South Africa and India, individuals, even the most troublesome individuals, enjoyed the fundamental liberties of speaking, writing, publishing, petitioning, propagandizing. "There were open skies for Gandhi's propaganda not only in South Africa, but also in India, Great Britain and the whole British Empire."[166] The implication that satyāgraha could only operate in a constitutional democratic set-up is obvious.

In a recent study on non-violence, Prof. Rajkrishna remarks : "The victory of Gandhian non-violent resistance against British imperialism in India, which is rightly cited as proof of the power of such resistance, must be attributed—apart from the dynamics of the political events leading up to it—to the fact that the crucial condition required for the success of such resistance was satisfied. We and the British shared the same norms of ethical judgment, and spoke the same ethical language. And so we succeeded in persuading the British that the course of imperialist rule was evil.

"But it is foolish and potentially suicidal to rush, from our unique experience, to the sweeping generalisation that *any* people *anywhere* can similarly convert *any* unjust adversary. Where the contestants in a dispute do not share the same conscience, non-violence on the part of the oppressed may only lead to the indefinite prolongation and aggravation of their misery or to their glorious suicide."[166]

That the satyāgraha campaign in India owed its success largely to the British attitude has been acknowledged even by an orthodox Gandhite like Dr. Rajendra Prasad. Speaking about the British rulers in January 1953, he said : "...he [Gandhi] found suitable ground in this country and he found also—I must confess—noble adversaries who were capable of yielding to the appeal which non-violence makes. They had set a limit to their own action below which the British could not and did not go and we must admit, we must confess, that Gandhiji's success was due very largely to himself and his people but also to the British."[168]

Generally speaking, the literal adherents of Gandhian philosophy have not cared to give this question the consideration it deserves. They have generally echoed the Master and as such we do not find any use in referring to their opinions. A serious academic approach to this question has been made by Dr. Bondurant who contends the view that there is no chance of a successful operation of satyāgraha in a totalitarian country. She concedes that some of the steps required in an ideal satyāgraha compaign would be impossible under

circumstances obtaining in monolithic authoritarian states. Such, for instance, is the step of widespread publicity and propaganda conducted without secrecy. Yet, she argues, certain points may be reasonably supposed with regard to the success of satyāgraha even under totalitarian conditions. According to Dr. Bondurant : ".. it appears that this may depend to a substantial extent upon the prior knowledge and/or experience of members of that society with satyagraha. It is doubtful that any totalitarian system, however effective in its policing, could prevent word-of-mouth propagation of an idea, or even of an understanding of a technique, if there had been some previous understanding of its meaning and its effectiveness. For example, had the Jews of Germany been schooled in the art of satyagraha, an organized effort of satyagraha might have got under way. The chances for success are certainly as great as are the chances for violent revolution under the modern police-state system. Satyagraha may, in fact, be the only possibility open to an oppressed people in this age of highly technical means of oppression. Reflection upon this likelihood suggests the utility of developing techniques akin to satyagraha, as well as education in their use.

"There is no longer validity to the proposition that satyagraha can be successful only in the Indian milieu which supported and gave rise to it. Doubtless the technique would necessarily undergo modifications and development in its adaptation to other social circumstances and cultural experiences."[169]

Theoretically speaking, the technique of satyāgraha consists in appealing to and arousing the conscience of the antagonist. The degree of susceptibility of the latter will invariably, we believe, determine the extent to which a non-violent resistance can be successful. It may be theoretically true again that no individual or community is absolutely devoid of conscience and that the non-violent satyāgrahī will in due course succeed in his struggle. But that is a hypothesis. There is no fact known to us by the strength of which we can assert that satyāgraha can successfully operate in a political set-up where limited democratic

freedoms like freedom of speech and of press are denied. It is well-nigh difficult for us to agree with Dr. Bondurant, that 'word-of-mouth propagation' can be organized in a regime where even the mildest form of opposition, not to speak of direct action, is gagged and silenced. At least that has been our experience nearer home at Goa. The initial steps so necessary for the effective functioning of satyāgraha can only be pursued in a regime where at least there is no hindrance to public expression of feelings. It is farthest from our intention to make out that Indians enjoyed democratic freedom under the British Rāj. But however despotic it was, because of their constitutional commitment the British allowed a little dose of civil liberties ; it was a case of limited freedom. The satyāgrahīs at least found it possible to reach the masses and organize them for non-violent direct action. A study in contrast was Portuguese India, under the iron-rule of Salazaar, where satyāgraha could not be effectively organized inspite of repeated efforts. But this is not to suggest that the potentialities of satyāgraha are exhausted and cannot even be attempted at in countries living under tyranny. Gandhi himself said that "Satyagraha...is a science in the making",[170] and true to that spirit, experiments may be made to see whether satyāgraha can operate in such a conflict-situation. Success on a practical scale alone can dispel doubts as to the efficacy of this method in a totalitarian country. The test of any theory lies in action.

Conclusion

A universal panacea or not, satyāgraha served some positive function in a particular historical context of India. Jawaharlal Nehru rightly said that the dynamic of satyāgraha largely justified itself in India.[171] Gandhi met the needs of the hour with his practical programme of satyāgraha.[172] The individual satyāgraha campaigns being left out of our study, the salient features and the basic weaknesses of them, as well as their strength, need not be traced. We would concentrate more on the justification of satyāgraha as a technique. The novelty of this weapon lay in harnessing the moral strength of the people

and at the same time it acted as a good political tactic. The combination of moral force with political realism distinguished satyāgraha from other conventional methods. Ostensibly pacific, it was in essence a revolt against weakness. Satyāgraha launched a battle against the age-old weaknesses of the people. It roused the masses from their torpor and made them conscious ; it stirred them and steeled their will, made them fearless and threw them into unarmed but heroic battles. Therein lay the superiority of this method.

Whether satyāgraha would operate equally well and with equal success in the struggle against the rule of capital and for the establishment of a new social order, is a matter of opinion. The basic assumptions underlying this technique may be subject to question from quarters who are committed otherwise. But even then there are elements in satyāgraha technique that compel admiration even from non-believers and deserve emulation. A social actionist, of any persuasion, must forge methods to develop mass consciousness, mass initiative, discipline, a spirit of fearlessness, courage and self-suffering and must put unhesitating reliance on the creative political role of the masses, the absence of which renders ineffective any mass resistance-action. Accept it or not, satyāgraha is a none-too-blunt weapon of resistance. Satyāgraha shall remain 'eternal' until the message of resistance is lost upon mankind.